



IPSWICH PUBLIC MEETING

A public meeting was held at the Nansen Road Baptist Church Ipswich on Thursday 10 May at 19:00.

PRESENT:

Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner

Tim Passmore (Police and Crime Commissioner), Sandra Graffham (Communications Manager, OPCC) and Sarah McNulty (Business Co-ordinator, OPCC).

Suffolk Constabulary

Rachel Kearton (Assistant Chief Constable), Inspector Kevin Horton (Locality Inspector Ipswich West), Inspector Andrew Pursehouse (Locality Inspector Ipswich East) and Inspector Stuart Weaver (Locality Inspector Ipswich Central).

POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER AND ASSISTANT CHIEF CONSTABLE OVERVIEW

The PCC welcomed 60 members of the public to the meeting and made introductions. The PCC spoke briefly about the key elements of his role and current priorities. He mentioned the Police Precept and Government funding, local issues such as the work to tackle drugs and gangs.

ACC Rachel Kearton spoke about her role in managing Operations and delivery of service. She spoke about police visibility, the changing patterns of crime and managing resources. She acknowledged the concerns about access to drugs in Suffolk and talked about targeted activity and dedicated teams working to tackle the problems.

She said that the public were encouraged to use more of the Constabulary's online services and was positive that the introduction of the new Engagement Officer roles would enhance the face to face engagement capabilities. Police plans for the Summer periods were being made and they were continually analysing and predicting demand.

Inspector Stuart Weaver gave an overview from the Inspectors and said that they worked closely together to tackle issues across the district.

He said that in Ipswich Central there were issues of homelessness and begging which was being dealt with alongside partners and Police Community Support Officers helping the homeless through education. There were also issues with Anti-Social Behaviour and groups of males gathering which is intimidating, drugs and gangs, particularly in the Jubilee Park area and prostitution which was being tackled by a multi-agency group.

Inspector Pursehouse said that there had been work in the East recently to shut down a cannabis factory and ongoing work tackling Anti-Social Behaviour and speeding.

Inspector Horton said that motor vehicle crime is an issue in the North West, particularly thefts from vehicles with one individual alone having recently been dealt with for 46 offences. Drugs, County Lines and Anti-Social Behaviour were also being tackled.

Inspectors provided reassurance that they or a deputy have monthly meetings with local councillors by attending the Area Committee Meetings whenever possible and are listening to the public throughout the year, not just at these annual meetings.

QUESTIONS ASKED AND SUBJECTS DISCUSSED

- **Hate Crime / Disability Hate Crime / Hidden Disabilities**

A question was raised about the service provided to those subjected to hate crime, particularly those with disabilities, often hidden disabilities. Also about the way their cases are handled and their credibility at court. The PCC and Constabulary were asked to give some priority to supporting those individuals, acknowledging that those disabilities are varied and could be physical, mental, sensory or otherwise. There was disappointment that the Constabulary did not seem to hold data on disability hate crime.

The police representatives urged members of the public to continue to report hate crime and gave assurance that it would be taken seriously. The recent Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Hate Crime Inspection found Suffolk was delivering a good service in this area when compared nationally but it was recognised that there was a still lot of work to do.

- **Drugs**

Concerns were raised about drug paraphernalia in the Alderman Park area and it was suggested that there were reservations about being in this area, even in the daytime.

There were concerns about children being involved with drug taking and access to drugs, even outside schools in some areas.

Concerns were raised about the London Road and Norwich Road areas as there had been problems with drug dealing, dumping stolen cars, prostitution and thefts. It was noted that the lights going off at 12pm. Officers again urged people to keep reporting so that the police are aware of the concerns and issues. Assurance was given that the officers were aware and dealing with some of those matters. They said that bi-monthly meetings were taking place regarding on street prostitution. Street lights are controlled by the Council but where there are problems the police and residents can raise this and request that they are turned back on.

Drug problems in the Jubilee area were also highlighted as well as problems with knives and knife crime. Officers said that a number of knife sweeps had been carried out and whilst discarded knives had been found it was not believed that these were actually being hidden for use in any later violence. Regular foot patrols were carried out in Jubilee Park and action taken to increase visibility.

It was also suggested that the back gate of the Wingate House Garage was being used as a urinal. The police again urged people to report the issues.

- **Inconsiderate Parking / Obstructions**

A number of people raised concerns about motorists blocking pavements making it difficult for those in wheelchairs, with prams or with visual impairments to pass. Little Bramford Lane was one of the specific areas mentioned.

It was noted that enforcement of parking was dealt with by the local council but parking in terms of causing obstruction was a police matter. There was a campaign running urging people to think of others and leaflets being issued about considerate parking.

- **Violent Crime – South East of Ipswich**

There were some recent examples of violent crimes in the South East of Ipswich and it was suggested that increased police visibility would help to address this.

The ACC said that the Constabulary was continually working to try to balance and effectively locate resources. She said that a lot of work was being done behind the scene and with partners but officers were also being encouraged to make the most of the visibility whenever they can. There was an increase in crimes in people's homes rather than on the streets, such as domestic abuse, child exploitation and cyber-crime which also need to be investigated just as much.

Tim spoke of partnership work, pooling resources and commissioning work. He said that the Serious Violence Strategy from the Government would help to provide focus and was being progressed by the Public Sector Leaders Group. The public needed to keep letting the Constabulary and other agencies know what and where the problems are.

There was discussion about the need to get children and young people engaged in positive activities such as youth clubs as often when they hang around together this can be perceived as Anti-Social Behaviour, even when they are not actually doing anything wrong.

The work of Positive Futures and the Porch Project was discussed and a couple members of the audience also mentioned an 'Open To All' group that they were involved in. It was highlighted that the community has a part to play. Tim Passmore said that grant money was available for such projects and the Constabulary would provide support/input wherever possible. The importance of inputs and positive work in schools was recognised. Officers said that they were in liaison with schools and through the St Giles Trust working with ex-offenders on helping to educate young people. They were also working closely with Social Care and the YMCA in helping to get people involved in apprenticeships.

It was agreed that more needed to be done to raise awareness of what clubs and activities are actually available.

- **Nightclubs and officer presence**

Residents of central Ipswich, near the Unit 17 club, questioned why officers appear to be heavily present outside bars in the town centre areas and not so much in and around this club which is the main nightclub of Ipswich. They said there were problems with noise, urination in the street and church yard, violence and drunken people passing out.

Officers said that work was being done to further educate officers, encourage them to engage more proactively with door staff and members of the public whilst present at the bars and clubs. Comments made about people's behaviour whilst making their way from the clubs and congregating at the food vans would be fed back to staff. The problem with urination and

lack of public toilet facilities near to the clubs was something that had been raised with the Council and could be raised again.

The good work of the Town Pastors was acknowledged and a representative in attendance said that they were considering adjusting their hours so that they started slightly later and were then more involved in the early morning activities. They agreed to meet with Inspector Weaver following the meeting to discuss this.

- **Police Strip and Search Powers**

Concerns were raised about the police use of strip and search powers, particularly the use of the power on children (10-15 years) and the impact of this intrusive power on the individuals searched.

The PCC and ACC stated that the Stop and Search and Strip and Search powers were carefully regulated with scrutiny in place. Officers stopping an individual and carrying out a search would need to have appropriate grounds to use the powers. Grounds would be required to strip search and this would be carried out in Police Custody at one of the dedicated Police Investigations Centres. For Children an Appropriate Adult would be requested. An Appropriate Adult from the audience spoke of her experience in supporting a child at the Police Investigation Centre. She said that she was not actually in the room with the individual but was able to communicate and support them from outside the room and hear the clear instruction and care taken by custody staff in dealing with the matter. Re-assurance was provided regarding the procedures in place and that searches would be carried out by officers/staff of the same sex as the individuals.

There was a suggestion that ultra sound might be a more proportionate than the physical search but the officers present said that medical advice did not support that stance. The lengths detainees would go to in some cases not to go to the toilet were also mentioned.

- **Anti-Social Behaviour**

Concerns raised re groups of middle aged men drinking outside of the European food store close to the meeting venue and using the pavement as an off license selling vodka and cigarettes. It was suggested that with the warmer weather the problems seem to get worse. Fighting in the road amongst some of the children and even throwing bottles in the road had also been observed. Whilst the Police and Social Services did help to address this previously it was happening again. There were also issues with vehicle obstructions in and around this area as well as a van at the rear of this shop blocking the pavement.

The police officers acknowledged that there were some cultural issues in understanding the groups of people gathering but they appreciated how intimidating and noisy it could be. They were working with partners to improve relationships, communication and education within the community. Also working with Trading Standards to undertake test purchases and review license restrictions. They gave assurances that vehicles causing obstruction had been seized and they would continue to address those problems as they occur, ensuring that they do not simply move the problems from one street to another.

Concerns were also raised about issues in the Hollywells Ward and Anti-Social Behaviour in Cavendish Street, Myrtle Road and at the Waterfront as well as sexual harassment in Hollywells Park.

Officers said that they were aware of the issues and re-iterated the messages about planning resources for the Summer periods and also targeted work on the park areas. They were working to progress the investigation of the recent sexual offences case.

- **101 Telephone Service**

In discussing the above comments were also made about the problems with getting through to the police using the 101 service or e-mailing and waiting up to three days for a response.

Attendees were advised that an improved telephone system had been launched which should result in calls being handled more effectively.

- **Ravenswood Area**

A representative from the Ravenswood Facebook Community Group talked about issues specific to that area. She advised that there appeared to be a lack of communication with the Council over a burnt out car which remained in the proximity of the primary school for a number of days. Whilst the police had attended and put tape around the vehicle there was still lots of debris left which made the area unsafe. Numerous calls had to be made to the Council to chase this up before action was taken.

Officers said that they would carry out a crime and safety assessment but it would then be the council responsibility to remove the vehicle. They would expect this to be done in 1-2 days. Communications would hopefully be improved by the introduction of the engagement officers to keep people more informed about these types of incidents. Officers welcomed details of community contacts to help provide local information and feed information back to the community.

- **Officer Training / Dealing with victims**

A query was raised about the training given to officers in dealing with victims, particularly in understanding what other stress factors victims might be dealing with. Examples of varied police responses and the impact that has on individuals were also discussed.

Training for call takers includes direction about compassion, empathy, re-assurance, decision making and prioritisation. Officers also receive extensive training and tutorship which includes role play, guidance on updating victims and frequency of contact. Personalities and life experience also influence the way officers deal with the public.

The PCC thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 20:48