



## **MID-SUFFOLK PUBLIC MEETING**

A public meeting was held at The Cedars Hotel, Stowmarket on Wednesday 11 July at 19:00.

### **PRESENT:**

#### **Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner**

Tim Passmore (Police and Crime Commissioner), Liz Hollingworth (Business Administration and Policy Officer, OPCC).

#### **Suffolk Constabulary**

Acting Inspector Shawn Wakeling (Locality Inspector Stowmarket).

### **POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER AND LOCALITY INSPECTOR OVERVIEW**

The PCC welcomed 40 members of the public to the meeting and made introductions. He passed on the Chief Constable's apologies that he was unable to make the meeting.

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 and the important role of the voluntary sector in crime and disorder reduction and supporting victims of crime.

A/Inspector Wakeling gave an overview of local policing including work on Operation Velocity to tackle drugs and gang violence as, given the rail links between Stowmarket and Ipswich, this was a key concern for the area. Operation Winston had been mobilised to target theft from vehicles in rural areas. There continued to be a focus on anti-social behaviour and speeding in villages.

### **QUESTIONS ASKED AND SUBJECTS DISCUSSED**

A member of the public raised an ongoing issue he had with Suffolk Constabulary regarding Constabulary actions in 2016 on his farm. Details were taken and the PCC said he would follow this up outside of the meeting.

- **Inconsiderate Parking / Obstructions**

An issue was raised with inconsiderate parking at Pickerel Court Stowmarket where car parking on the roadside made it dangerous to pull out. The problem was particularly bad at weekends.

A/Inspector Wakeling said members of the public should contact the SNT where there were ongoing issues. The SNT would target parking offences where possible and subject to other priorities.

The PCC expressed his frustration with the delay with the implementation of Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) whereby districts would take on responsibility from the Police. He confirmed that all the necessary work has been completed by the Constabulary and completion from the Secretary of State for Transport was awaited. The PCC said he was hopeful that the deployment of a new PCSO in Stowmarket would also enable parking issues to be tackled whilst the introduction of CPE was awaited.

- **Speeding**

Speeding in villages was raised as a widespread issue. An example from Rickinghall was given where the parish council had invested in speed display systems to warn drivers and collect data on speeding to pass to the Constabulary. Speeds of 70mph and over had been recorded.

A/Inspector Wakeling said that data could be passed to the 'Safecam' team and depending on the data they could either set up additional data collection or send enforcement units. He said that the use of speed indicator displays in villages was a deterrent and the Constabulary was grateful for the support of the public and local councils as well as the valuable work undertaken by Community Speedwatch volunteers. Specific intelligence on serial offenders should be sent to the SNT.

The PCC outlined the continued investment in the Roads Policing Unit and as well as the work carried out by the Casualty Reduction Team in relation to enforcement and education of the 'Fatal Four'.

- **Transparency**

A member of the public commended the PCC for the transparency of information available on the PCC website and asked whether he would consider publishing recordings of the public meetings as he felt that the notes from the meetings did not accurately reflect the depth or breadth of the discussion. This would also make the discussion available to those unable to attend the meeting.

The PCC said he would consider this and added that some of the PCC's public meetings had been filmed by a volunteer, with the recordings available on the PCC website.

The dissolution of the Independent Advisory Group was noted by a member of the public who said that it was unfortunate as the group had been well intentioned in their scrutiny of the police. The PCC said that the IAG had not been well attended and had not been functioning effectively for some time. There were opportunities for the public to raise concerns with the PCC at public meetings and individual surgeries. The PCC said he would always consider new ideas and, if there was sufficient demand, a group could be reformed.

- **101 Telephone Service**

A councillor said his constituents had raised problems with getting through on the 101 service and, whilst he encouraged people to report crimes and pass intelligence on, there was apathy towards doing so because of the time it took. Another councillor endorsed this view saying that whilst people would report crime to him they didn't want to spend the time waiting on 101, thought it was not important enough to report to the police or said they would 'just get a crime number'.

A/Inspector Wakeling encouraged people to report crimes and incidents as they could indicate a pattern or emerging problem. Attendees were advised that an improved

telephone system had been launched which should result in calls being handled more effectively. Non-emergencies could also be reported through the online system. In an emergency, 999 should always be used.

- **Police Visibility and Community Engagement**

A member of the public said that proactive communication with local areas needed to be improved and suggested that police officers and the PCC could contribute articles about local issues to village newsletters. A/Inspector Wakeling said this could be the role of the Community Engagement Officer and the PCC also agreed to consider this.

A/Inspector Wakeling said that having listened to feedback there had been significant changes recently which would lead to improvements in communication and community engagement. The Community Engagement Officer in the locality would focus on building relationships and proactively communicating including through social media. Whilst they would not be able to attend every community meeting they would be the point of contact.

The PCC suggested that there should be once a year attendance at council meetings from the Community Engagement Officer and suggested that joint meetings would be a good use of time.

A/Inspector Wakeling encouraged people to continue to report intelligence and use the information available to them through the police newsletters.

A member of the public raised concerns of minimal police presence from the SNT, once PCSOs finished at 6pm, as he had been assured previously by the Chief Constable there would be improved visibility. A/Inspector Wakeling said that the area was always covered by more than the SNT officers as there were Response Officers, Investigators, Firearms and Dog units and Roads Policing.

A/Inspector Wakeling said that there were still opportunities for officers to patrol where this was an appropriate use of time. This was reiterated in response to a question regarding visibility in Needham Market where the local PCSO had regularly patrolled. A/Inspector Wakeling said that this could be considered in terms of a deterrent to low level anti-social behaviour.

The PCC reiterated that the SNT was just part of policing in the area and said that the caseload per officer in Suffolk was one of the highest in the country. Policing had to reflect the financial settlement available but the PCC said he continued to campaign for a fairer funding settlement and urged the public to raise this with their MPs.

Residents from Cedar Park raised their concerns about anti-social behaviour and the lack of police presence and, with the planned housing developments in the area, the problem would only get worse. It was suggested that police should be engaging with young people in schools.

A/Inspector Wakeling encouraged the community to support the police through considering volunteering, for example as Special Constables, Local Policing Volunteers and through Community Speedwatch.

- **Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs)**

A question was raised about the uptake of council funded PCSOs for their local community.

The PCC confirmed that local councils do have the option to fund PCSOs and provided indicative costs. Official confirmation of this would be sent shortly but the PCC said that the opportunity was already proving popular.

- **Prisons and Sentencing**

A member of the public asked whether the PCC felt let down by prisons and the sentencing given to offenders, which often seem lenient.

The PCC acknowledged that sentencing needed to be at the right level to act as an effective deterrent and that rehabilitation was important in breaking the offending cycle. The PCC said that he visited local prisons and he was disappointed to see the number of repeat offenders on short sentences, many of whom had mental health problems, had been in care growing up or had no qualifications. The PCC said that the pattern of repeat offending needed to be broken through providing education and job opportunities. A number of schemes had been funded by the PCC to support people to move away from offending and turn their lives around.

- **Hare Coursing**

A member of the public said that the issue of hare coursing had been raised at the last public meeting and there was concern about the risk to members of the public but also the police who attended as these criminals were notoriously violent.

The PCC said that various methods were employed to deter and catch hare coursers including the Drone, Armed Response and Automatic Number Plate recognition.

- **Anti-Social Behaviour and Drugs**

A member of the public asked how the public could pass on intelligence to the police where they were aware of drug taking and dealing. A/Inspector Wakeling said that members of the public should not put themselves at risk but as much information as possible should be passed on to the police including any specific intelligence such as the drug type and identities. He acknowledged that the public often did not receive communication in return about how the information they provided had been used and he understood that this could be frustrating.

A specific example of an ongoing problem with drugs and anti-social behaviour by a whole family was outlined. A/Inspector Wakeling said he would take details of this specific case. A multi-agency approach could be the best solution in cases such as this. Operation Velocity was working to bring partners together to resolve issues rather than each agency acting separately.

The PCC said that there needed to be a societal response to drugs, gangs and violence and work with young people, inside and outside of schools, was very important.

- **Domestic Abuse / Multi-agency working**

A member of the public thanked the police for their actions in a case of domestic abuse she had been involved in and said that she had been impressed with the multi-agency approach that had been used.

***The PCC thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 20:50***