



FOREST HEATH DISTRICT PANEL

A meeting was held in the Brandon House Hotel, High Street, Brandon on Wednesday, 1 May 2013 at 2.30 pm.

PRESENT:

Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner

Sarah Carter (Business Co-ordinator), Tim Passmore (Police & Crime Commissioner) and Ian Rands (Business Manager).

Constabulary

Inspector Matt Rose, Local Policing Commander.

Panel Members

John Barker (Mildenhall Parish Council), Bill Bishop (Suffolk County Councillor), Andrea Burgess (Brandon Day Centre), Rachel Carrington (NFU), Joe Carter (Racing Welfare), Matthew Darrock-Thompson (Chamber of Commerce), Douglas Day (FSB), Bob Gooch (Neighbourhood Watch), Brian Harvey (Chair, Crime Prevention Panel and Magistrate), James Henson (Neighbourhood Watch), David Overton (Crime Prevention Panel and Specials), Reg Silvester (Brandon Town Council), Tony Simmons (Brandon Town Council and Forest Heath District Councillor), Eddie Stewart (Forest Heath District Councillor) and David Wheeler (SALC).

The PCC welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

1. POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER OVERVIEW

- 1.1 The PCC gave a presentation that included the purpose of the meetings, the key objectives in his Police & Crime Plan, his personal values and the steps taken to develop and consult on that Plan and how it would be monitored. [a copy of the slides will be attached to these notes for the record].

Matters highlighted included the election process, working together across the public sector and locally procured services, the need to concentrate on prolific offenders and problem families, the savings in running his office compared to the previous Police Authority, an underspend of over £2m in the Constabulary budget for 2012/13, Council Tax being frozen and talks with the new Chief Constable on the development of a longer term plan linked to the former 'Suffolk First' initiative.

2. LOCAL POLICING COMMAND UPDATE

- 2.1 MR gave a presentation that included crime statistics and other performance details [a copy of the slides will be attached for the record]. Matters highlighted included a targeted campaign linked to burglary and an improved position in April following an earlier spike, the move of the SNT base to the new Brandon Centre where other

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partner agencies would be located, the move of officers in Mildenhall to the Hub and the continuing importance of priority setting meetings at SNT level.

2. QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM THE FLOOR

- 2.1 *Reference was made to the Police & Crime Plan and what were considered some disappointing linked aspects : the level of resources devoted to policing the night-time economy and the need to work closely with licencing authorities. The concerns also linked to drugs and the need to identify those that fell within the 'serious and organised' category. There was praise for the focus on rural crime.*

The points were acknowledged including seeking to get large businesses that relied on late night opening to contribute resources. The PCC emphasised the need for resources to be devoted to dealing with drug dealers.

- 2.2 *It was suggested that a lot of shoplifting incidents were not being reported because of a lack of response and there was a need to target repeat offenders. More visible policing was suggested. Under-reporting was also seen as an issue with the old and vulnerable who were often too embarrassed to report crimes of a personal nature.*

The PCC and Local Commander both emphasised the importance of reporting. Each call was assessed and added to the overall picture – this in turn could be highlighted at daily officer briefings, particularly the question of targeting prolific offenders. It appeared that the issue of shoplifting had not been highlighted as a particular problem in priority setting meetings. Additional support for vulnerable groups was also available through crime prevention activities.

It was also suggested that some people were still reluctant to telephone/use IT and liked the personal touch afforded at the police station. It was explained that staffing front desks was an expensive resource given the limited number of enquiries. A suggestion of an alteration in opening times at the Brandon office would be reviewed. From the PCC's standpoint he was keen to promote the sharing of premises with partner agencies.

- 2.3 *While there was praise for the PCC's stance on supporting spending on local goods, it was suggested that the rules needed to be relaxed to allow firms to bid for contracts.*

The PCC said that this was very much on his radar, particularly the impact of EU regulations.

- 2.4 *It was suggested that Brandon suffered when compared to Newmarket and Mildenhall in relation to response times, particularly at weekends.*

MR was not aware of any evidence to suggest that was the case – the principle of deploying the nearest available officer applied to all areas. He stated that Suffolk would shortly be moving to a new Command & Control system run jointly with Norfolk called 'Storm' – this would help in terms of deployment and could include Norfolk officers working near the border and vice versa.

- 2.5 *A representative of the Magistracy was worried that the parameters for the use of CRs had gone too far and quoted cases of GBH and ABH. He was also concerned that there should be strict limits to its use when dealing with repeat offenders.*

This was a matter that had been raised with the PCC previously and he was in discussion with chief officers and was to attend a Suffolk Magistrates Association meeting shortly when it was due to be raised. From his point of view the system needed to be transparent but expressed concern over its use in more serious cases. The Local Commander defended its use in circumstances when criminalising a person was not appropriate. Records were maintained and could be interrogated as far as repeat offenders were concerned.

- 2.6 *It was suggested that staff were moved around too often and this could impact on the service to the public.*

The PCC said that the intention to develop a longer term plan would be linked to a review of resources – he was anxious to avoid a ‘sticking plaster’ approach. There was an acknowledgement that to seek promotion, staff were expected to gain experience in varying roles.

- 2.7 *It was stated that white collar crime/fraud/Internet crime etc were recurring themes amongst small businesses and the FSB could be utilised as a resource in terms of advice and expertise.*

MR explained how fraud issues were dealt with on a national basis (Action Fraud); if a crime was a local issue it would be referred to the relevant Force. The PCC said that this was a continuing theme since he had taken up his role and he had concerns as to the costs to the economy. He had taken this up with the new Chief Constable and it was also the subject of discussions at business forum meetings he held with chamber and other business association representatives.

- 2.8 *Reference was made to the issue of delays following accidents on the A14 and A11 and the role of the police.*

The PCC had learnt that the Highways Agency had protocols in place and it was not a simple matter for the police to deal with. He had attended a meeting with MPs and other interested parties and further discussions were proposed. In his view the way the protocols were followed was not always appropriate.

- 2.9 *Some frustration was raised in terms of the role of the CPS and what was seen as a lack of will to prosecute. There was reference back to shoplifting and making an example of offenders.*

The PCC was aware of such concerns and had begun discussions.

- 2.10 *Officer attendance at parish council and other meetings and events was raised as an issue.*

MR acknowledged that shift patterns did not always fit with attendance. Some officers were willing to change their shift but this could not be enforced. Providing a written report to a council was an alternative means of keeping in touch.

The meeting closed at 4.57 pm

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