

BABERGH DISTRICT FORUM

The Forum was held at the Sudbury Town Hall, Market Hill, Sudbury on Thursday, 10 October 2013 at 6.30 pm.

PRESENT:

Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner

Sandra Graffham (Communications Manager), Tim Passmore (Police & Crime Commissioner), Ian Rands (Business Manager) and Vanessa Scott (Policy Officer).

Suffolk Constabulary

Acting Inspector Kevin Horton (Babergh Local Policing Command), Douglas Paxton (Chief Constable) and Acting Superintendent Kim Warner (Strategic Policing Commander, West)

1. POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER OVERVIEW

- 1.1 The PCC welcomed around 26 members of the public to the meeting and made introductions. A copy of his slides will be attached to these notes for the record.

2. POLICING UPDATE

- 2.1 Following an overview of the position across the county from the Chief Constable, Acting Superintendent Kim Warner and Acting Inspector Kevin Horton gave a presentation on policing in the Babergh area; a copy of their slides will also be attached for the record.

[At the close of the presentations the PCC asked Robert Everitt, Chair of the West Suffolk Community Safety Partnership to speak about the work of the CSP, including the various projects it had supported with the funding provided via the PCC's Community Safety Grant. Mr Everitt had application packs available at the meeting for bodies seeking funding.]

3. QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM THE FLOOR

- 3.1 *A Mrs Murphy expressed concern as to a lack of sharing of intelligence, finger prints and DNA between certain EU countries that had been evidenced recently in the media.*

The PCC said that he could raise such issues nationally through the Association of PCCs. The Chief Constable said that checks were made with Interpol through an ACPO protocol when they were required in the PICs. This was not an automatic when checking on a person's record and involved an additional process.

- 3.2 *John Gaunt spoke about social networking and asked for information on who led on tweets from Babergh police as he felt that there were not enough regular updates.*

Acting Inspector Horton said that six officers had access but acknowledged the point being made and the need for smarter working.

- 3.3 *Mr Gaunt's second point related to Response Policing where he questioned if the right officers were being deployed to incidents and also whether the hand-over processes worked.*

Acting Superintendent Warner said that the Control Room would deploy the nearest available resource and it was a 'borderless' system. He acknowledged that keeping victims in touch with developments remained an area where the Constabulary could improve and mentioned the Victim's Contract as a means of doing so. The PCC also mentioned the need for victims to be updated on who was dealing with their case.

- 3.4 *County Councillor James Finch raised a number of issues:*

- Speeding was a major issue in rural communities in his area causing danger and damage – how could a difference be made? Should there be more enforcement?
- An example of ASB in Groton where the response was not as expected and older people in the village had been scared;
- A belief that the approach to accident data and the reliance on Constabulary figures meant the true picture did not materialise as so many were not reported.

The PCC made reference to a report from the Chief Constable on enforcement activity that was being considered by the Accountability & Performance Panel on 31 October. He hoped that the opportunity would be taken to raise public awareness of the approach to enforcement and inspire greater confidence. The Chief Constable added that reducing 'Killed & Serious Injury' accidents was a priority and he acknowledged that communities continued to raise concerns and it was important to respond to them. Acting Inspector Horton said that regular meetings were now convened with the County Council on road safety issues and if there were specific locations where speeding was known to be an issue it could be raised.

Acting Superintendent Warner was not familiar with the actual incident at Groton, but emphasised the challenge the Constabulary had in responding to demands across such a wide geographic area. He explained the approach in the Control Room to such reports and mentioned initiatives such as access to mobile data that would help officers spend more time on patrol.

- 3.5 *A representative of Sudbury Town Council asked for financial assistance to support the continuing promotion of the volunteer street warden scheme.*

The PCC agreed to review a bid while Robert Everitt also agreed to consider the case on behalf of the West Suffolk CSP.

- 3.6 *A member of the public from Cornard referred to road accidents and vehicle and other crime which he believed was linked to the decision to turn off the street lighting. He suggested that selected lights should be left on. He also expressed concern over the condition of the main Sudbury – Bury road.*

The PCC said that he could take up the issue of street lighting and Acting Inspector Horton agreed to review the relevant crime statistics. Acting Superintendent Warner said that in his experience there was not a direct correlation between crime levels and the street lighting issue.

Acting Inspector Horton agreed to obtain more detail of the road maintenance issue so that he could raise it at one of the joint agency meetings.

- 3.7 *A further resident of Cornard spoke about damage and ASB that resulted from groups of young people gathering in the park near Sycamore Road. Sometimes there were groups of thirty 12-18 year olds and this was very intimidating. She acknowledged that there were few alternative diversionary activities. She was supported by a neighbour who spoke about their frustration with the response to 101 calls.*

Acting Superintendent Warner encouraged the residents to attend the next SNT priority setting meeting which was in the Stevenson Centre on 21 November at 6.00pm. This was a prime example of an issue that the SNT could help to address along with partner agencies.

Robert Everitt said the CSP were already aware of the issue and agreed to talk to the residents at the close of the meeting as to possible support. It was recognised that certain activities for young people did exist in Sudbury. The PCC mentioned his support of Positive Futures, an organisation linked to the County Council that provided sporting and other activities for young people.

The Chief Constable encouraged the residents to continue reporting incidents, emphasising the need for intelligence to build-up a picture of the problems in the area. In response to a request for the police station to be open for longer periods to report incidents, he advised that this was costly and impractical.

Another member of the audience had been involved in running the Cornard Tank Group which had faltered because of a lack of funding and voluntary help.

- 3.8 *A member of the Street Watch scheme felt that a ban on street drinking should be enforced in Sudbury as it had in other similar towns.*

Acting Inspector Horton said that the development of a drinking by-law had been raised with the Town Council previously and he was happy to raise the matter again.

- 3.9 *Robin Hughes, a representative of N/W in Long Melford said that the vast majority of the issues raised with him involved speeding. He liked to see visible policing which was a good deterrent while he also believed a firmer approach from the Courts was necessary.*

The PCC made reference again to the report on speed enforcement that would be presented by the Chief Constable to the Accountability & Performance Panel. He also mentioned discussions at the Local Criminal Justice Board on the approach to sentencing and his decision to support 20 additional police officers from reserves.

The Chief Constable spoke about the benefits of out of court disposals, including evidence of reductions in re-offending, while Acting Superintendent Warner spoke about the role of SNTs, including the importance of being seen.

- 3.10 *Babergh Councillor, Nigel Bennett put on record his thanks for the level of service provided by the SNT in his area. He asked the PCC how he was coping in seeking to represent the whole of Suffolk given the wide variety of needs and less resources. He had particular concerns in respect of Domestic Abuse cases and possible under-reporting.*

The PCC was happy to discuss his role outside the meeting but in summary mentioned the different ways he interacted with the public including surveys, the website and face-to-face meetings. He acknowledged that reductions in the government grant for policing would bring further pressure but was confident of steps in hand to protect front-line policing. He highlighted the need for greater co-operation across the public sector.

As to Domestic Violence he was pleased with what had been achieved already in terms of raising awareness of the issues and giving people the confidence to come forward. He would certainly do what he could to encourage reporting and knew the Constabulary was promoting a similar message.

4. QUESTIONS POSED TO THE AUDIENCE

- 4.1 Questions were posed using the interactive voting equipment and the results will be published with these notes for the record.

The PCC thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.22 pm.