



WEST AREA PUBLIC MEETING

A public meeting was held at Bury St Edmunds Rugby Club, Southgate Green, Bury St Edmunds on Tuesday 24 September 2019 at 7pm. The west area meeting covered policing issues for the towns of Bury St Edmunds, Stowmarket, Sudbury, Haverhill, Mildenhall, Newmarket and Brandon and surrounding villages

PRESENT:

Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner

Police and Crime Commissioner, Tim Passmore and Sandra Graffham, Head of Communications & Engagement.

Suffolk Constabulary

Chief Constable, Steve Jupp; Chief Inspector, Andrew Pursehouse (West Area); Inspector Matt Paisley (Locality Inspector Bury St Edmunds), Sgt Steve Wright (Community Engagement) and PC Andre de Jongh (Community Engagement Officer for Bury St Edmunds SNT).

POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER AND CHIEF CONSTABLE OVERVIEW

The PCC welcomed 50 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 the need for fairer Government funding and local issues such as the work to tackle drugs and gangs.

The Chief Constable gave an operational overview of policing in the county. He spoke about police visibility, the changing patterns of crime and managing resources. He explained that Suffolk Constabulary was rated Good by Her Majesty's Inspectorate and encouraged the audience to read the executive summary of the report. He spoke about the changes since the precept was raised and explained a little of the role of the new proactive Sentinel team. He spoke about 'creating capacity' and how these public meetings help him to focus on what the public want - to help them feel safe and reduce the fear of crime.

QUESTIONS ASKED AND SUBJECTS DISCUSSED

- **Speeding in villages**

The PCC explained that the primary contact for speeding issues is via the local Safer Neighbourhood Team. The Chief spoke about the RoadSafe partnership – which involves

police and county council – working together to make the county's roads safer and reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads. Police play an important part in changing behaviours by enforcing the fatal four – speeding, driving without seatbelt, using mobile phone whilst driving and drink/drug driving. More locally communities can help themselves through Community Speedwatch and Speed Indicator Devices (SID) which display a smiley/frowning face Another member of the audience asked about speeding issues by one driver – Chief Insp Pursehouse picked this up at the end of the meeting. Another member of the audience commented that the vehicle activated signs are effective and this option works well in their village.

- **Closure of front desks in police stations**

A member of the audience asked why - with the extra funding from the precept increase - police stations closed in 2016 could not reopen. The Chief Constable explained there is public access at the three main police stations – Lowestoft, Bury St Edmunds and Ipswich – at all other stations the front desks are no longer open to the public although the police stations are still operational. In many cases visitors to police stations attend for non-policing issues.

- **Police attendance at Parish council meetings**

A member of the audience commented that his parish council misses the attendance of a local police officer at their meetings. Ch Insp Pursehouse explained that officers need to make best use of their time and attending parish council meetings is impractical. He explained that the new community engagement officer role will help build relationships with local communities and they can be contacted as required. The CEOs are responsible for getting messages out to their communities in the most effective way and the impact of this role would be monitored.

- **Communication with public**

The Chief Constable explained that investment in extra officers has put more officers on the frontline and this new model is regularly monitored. Also explained communication with the public is key and that officers need to work with communities so they know what's happening.

- **Civilian investigators**

The Chief explained that civilian investigators are not a cheap option. Using civilians to support warranted police officers allows those with the power to arrest to maximise these powers. This also allows the Constabulary to bring in digital expertise which police officers may not have.

- **101 Telephone Service**

In discussing the above, comments were also made about the problems with getting through to the police using the 101 service. Attendees were advised that an improved telephone system now allows calls to be triaged so the more urgent calls can be handled

more effectively. 999 calls continue to break targets. The PCC encouraged callers to use the website to report crime.

- **Community Speedwatch**

A member of the audience from Bures asked for an explanation why Essex and Suffolk have different policies for Community Speedwatch. The Chief Constable explained this was down to funding. Suffolk parishes need to pay for the Speedwatch equipment, in Essex it is free. The PCC spoke about his commitment to fight for fairer funding for Suffolk. The Chief Constable suggested the audience could lobby their MP to call for parity.

- **Specific issues at the FiveWays junction in Barton Mills**

This junction was recently named in the media as the worst junction in Suffolk and a member of the audience wanted to know if it was possible to position a police car on the roundabout to improve driver behaviour. The PCC spoke about regular meetings with the highways authority and the comment was noted.

- **Road safety training in schools**

A concerned member of the audience commented on the need for better road safety education in schools. The PCC explained that the county's RoadSafe Board – of which he is a member – funds education projects in schools.

- **Issues in the Bury St Edmunds town centre involving young people**

The PCC said he was aware of the situation and extra patrols had been directed to the town centre. The chief explained that some of the issues such as street drinking and begging need a partnership approach to help them to help themselves. The anti-social behaviour of young people needs proactive work with schools and the youth services and this is being done to find long-term solutions. The PCC spoke about funding opportunities from his PCC fund – details of which are on the website: www.suffolk-pcc.gov.uk.

- **Mental Health**

A member of the audience asked how much police time is spent dealing with mental health issues. The PCC explained that he did not have specific figures but it is too much time. Funding has been agreed to fund a mental health nurse in the control room and in a triage care to work with the Constabulary. The Chief Constable explained this helps free-up police officer time and ensures the person in crisis gets the professional help they need. This needs to be dealt with in partnership with other agencies.

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