



THE SUSSEX POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER: PUBLIC MEETING

6.00 pm Tuesday 5th September 2017
Chair: Councillor Dr James Walsh KSt.J, Deputy Mayor

Minutes

1. Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1 Councillor Dr Walsh welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the evacuation procedures. The Mayor had sent his apologies which were noted and in his absence Dr Walsh KSt.J as Deputy Mayor would be chairing the meeting.
- 1.2 The Deputy Mayor proceeded to outline the format for the evening. Observing that two local by elections were imminent, he reminded everyone that this was a public meeting which had been convened to give residents the opportunity to address the Police and Crime Commissioner directly on matters relating to policing in Littlehampton. The Town Council was not permitted to provide publicity or a forum for electioneering in the period leading up to the elections. He therefore reminded politicians, prospective politicians and their supporters that they could not use the meeting as a forum to promote themselves or their candidates or to conduct a party-political debate and asked them to simply listen to the debate.
- 1.3 He proceeded to introduce Katy Bourne, the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner and Inspector Marc Clothier and invited them to address the meeting.

2. Talk from the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner

- 2.1 Mrs Bourne began by saying that she was pleased to be invited back to Littlehampton. Acknowledging the policing challenges in the Town she appreciated having the opportunity to hear direct from residents about the issues that mattered to them. She was joined by Inspector Marc Clothier who would speak more about the changes to local policing in the area.
- 2.2 Mrs Bourne proceeded to deliver an update on the challenges facing the police service at a national level and how these related to the force in Sussex. Recent national and international incidents and the emergence of historic cases of abuse meant that public safety and

prevention of terrorism were high on the Government agenda. Combined with the rapid increase in fraud and online crime, resources were stretched. Sussex police had an annual budget of £250 million, a substantial portion of which was funded through local taxation, so the pressure was on. She went on to explain how the increase in the police precept would be invested in modern technologies aimed at delivering a more responsive and efficient service. Whilst Sussex remained one of the safest counties in the UK, she acknowledged that there were times when residents simply did not feel that way.

- 2.3** She also sympathised with those who felt frustrated with the changes that were taking place in the Force and appreciated everyone's patience whilst the service was adapting to the new model. Accepting that there were still issues with aspects of the service which had not been addressed, for example the 101 service and the response to anti-social behaviour she stated that she continued to hold senior officers to account on their performance. She invited members of the public to contact her (contact information was circulated during the meeting) and listen to the monthly performance meetings she held with Chief Officers which were broadcast on the PCC website. Before taking questions, she invited Arun District Neighbourhood Policing Inspector, Marc Clothier, to address the meeting.

3. Update on Local Policing from District Neighbourhood Policing Inspector

- 3.1** Inspector Clothier outlined the changes that had been implemented to the way Sussex Police operated locally. Updated technology was being deployed with the aim of reducing response times and improving efficiency. The changes in the PCSO model implemented last year were still evolving but were considered beneficial as these officers were now able to deal more effectively with a wider range of offences. Prevention work remained a priority and Youth Prevention Officers had been reinstated to work with schools. The focus on neighbourhood policing continued with local neighbourhood teams being deployed to police communities based on the principles of awareness, prevention and education. The work of these teams was based on monitoring local activity, highlighting and dealing with emerging issues. They were also key to delivering a more cohesive approach to complex issues such as child sexual exploitation and on-line fraud. In implementing these changes, it was acknowledged that more needed to be done in terms of improving public awareness and reassuring communities, particularly where there were concerns about the lack of police presence.
- 3.2** Before moving on to the public forum, the Chair of the meeting asked Inspector Clothier to explain in more detail how the Police expected to deliver the new model across the District when the number of Officers available to them had fallen to what, in his opinion, was an extraordinarily low level. In response, Inspector Clothier explained that neighbourhood policing was part of a much larger team. Acknowledging

the decline in numbers, he stated that the local response teams could be deployed across the county if required and were supported by central teams. The Commissioner highlighted the need for the policing model to adapt to the changing nature of crime and stated that in doing so, it relied more on technology to make it easier for officers to work in the community. It was also noted that Sussex Police had a partnership arrangement with neighbouring Surrey Police which gave them the flexibility to call on each other for support if required.

4. Plenary Session

- 4.1** The Chair opened the meeting to members of the public to ask questions of the Commissioner and to comment upon policing in the Town.
- 4.2** Clive Fennell, Chairman of the Friends of Mewsbrook Park spoke of the problems with anti-social behaviour and vandalism in the Park. Speaking of the dedicated PCSO support that had been a feature of policing the park in the past, he stated that it was this on the ground policing which the volunteers and residents in the area had valued and was considered to have been key in defusing situations and deterring this type of activity. Highlighting the work of the volunteers who helped maintain the park and run the miniature railway, he stated that it was demoralising when crime and vandalism occurred and received no police response.
- 4.3** Inspector Clothier explained that part of the new model was intelligence lead and therefore relied heavily on reporting, collating and analysing information to ensure resources were appropriately deployed and information shared with other agencies. Acknowledging the flaws with the 101-reporting system he stated that local groups would, if they have not already received it, be issued with details of a local point of contact for the Neighbourhood Team. He emphasised that crime or incidents of anti-social behaviour should continue to be reported to the Force contact centre using 999, 101 or online as appropriate.
- 4.4** Picking up on the theme that prevention was better than cure, Councillor Tony Squires lamented the loss of the local PCSO in Wick who had been very proactive visiting local youth groups and schools and urged that the Police to concentrate on local prevention work. Whilst it was acknowledged that society had a part to play in this work, it was also noted that a portion of the increase in the police precept had been allocated to support the development of youth prevent teams in the area.
- 4.5** Mrs Edna Ferrier, Chairman of the Rope Walk Residents Association, recounted the handling of an incident on the West Bank during the summer. What had initially been reported as anti-social behaviour of one person, turned out to be a case of an individual requiring medical help. Despite reporting the incident using 101, it took an hour for a

PCSO to arrive and having assessed the situation, other services had to be deployed to resolve the situation. She stated that this had been distressing and in her view, could have been avoided if there had been a quicker response when the incident was initially reported.

- 4.6** Although unable to comment upon the specific incident, it was explained that the call would have been prioritised taking into consideration other activity at the time. The Commissioner sympathised with those who had witnessed the incident and stated that “999” remained an active and useable emergency number. It was accepted that more could be done to highlight this in the public consciousness. Highlighting that the Police relied heavily on the details provided on reported incidents, the Commissioner emphasised that if a member of the public believed an incident was of an urgent nature then the emergency call procedure, 999 should be used.
- 4.7** Mr Simon Vickers, Chairman of the Littlehampton Traders Partnership, raised several questions regarding policing in the Town Centre. He asked if the deployment of Business Wardens meant that policing in the Town had been downgraded, what could be done to curb the increasing incidents of anti-social behaviour in the evenings throughout the Town and how the Police planned to address the deficiencies in the 101 service. In particular he questioned the effectiveness of the Wardens for traders and businesses as their powers were focussed on littering and dog fouling rather than theft, vandalism and street drinking.
- 4.8** In response, the Commissioner stated that in her view, Business Wardens were a positive step in addressing the problems faced by traders regarding petty crime. The Police worked closely with Arun District Council on this initiative and she invited Mr Chris Neilson, the Sussex Police lead for Business Crime to explain more about this initiative.
- 4.9** Mr Neilson briefly outlined the Warden model that was being rolled out in Sussex to address crime and anti-social behaviour. The Wardens had a range of powers including the right to seize alcohol, deal with begging and request the name and address of someone they believe has committed a relevant offence. Their effectiveness was based on the ability to form relationships with individuals to prevent crime. It was noted that if it became apparent that a core of prolific offenders was emerging in an area that Banning Orders could be issued.
- 4.10** Mr Nigel Anderson, representing the Littlehampton Harbour Stakeholders Group, addressed the meeting. Citing a series of attempted boat break-ins, he stated that having reported these using 101, people were advised that the Police wouldn’t investigate further unless the culprits could be identified. Consequently, people were no longer reporting these matters. This was very frustrating, and he felt alarming because the new Policing Model as outlined earlier in the meeting relied heavily on intelligence which because of this policy,

would no longer be received. In addition, it was observed that the Police no longer attended the Littlehampton Harbour Stakeholders Group and suggested that they should re-engage with it.

- 4.11** Inspector Clothier explained how difficult it could be to investigate incidents with little evidence but emphasised the need for reports to be logged. The Commissioner acknowledged that the Police needed to restore public confidence in this respect. Resources were limited but there was an acceptance that reconnecting with this Group could be beneficial. She therefore agreed to take this forward in person on behalf of the Group.
- 4.12** Mrs Sarah Tyrell, a River Road resident, reported continued problems with cyclists ignoring the one-way system in the area. Often, when approaching the culprits, people were suffering abuse and despite constant reporting there was no enforcement. In response, the Commissioner requested that these reports were directed to the “Operation Crackdown” reporting mechanism. This was operated by the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership whose resources were dedicated to tackling anti-social driving.
- 4.13** On behalf of the Wick Village Traders Association, Ms Carol Emberson stated that the loss of the local PCSO as a presence on the high street was felt by traders and residents alike, but especially traders who felt they had been neglected. In response, Mr Chris Neilson, the Sussex Police lead for Business Crime agreed to take this forward with a view to investigating Business Wardens for the area.
- 4.14** On behalf of Littlehampton Shopwatch, Mr Tyndall Jones commented on what he viewed as the worrying trend in the Police not investigating certain minor offences and what it could lead to. Recounting an incident of vandalism of trading premises, he stated that the initial report of the incident had been ignored. Commenting on the system he considered that it needed to be changed and that offences, however minor should be investigated and justice delivered. Explaining how the restorative justice programme worked, the Commissioner agreed the nature of a crime should not affect enforcement.
- 4.15** Mrs Di Larkin addressed the meeting and spoke about incidents of anti-social driving throughout the Town involving speeding motorbikes and cars. Having experienced this at close hand she stated that it was both disturbing and distressing. Adding that she considered a visible Police presence such as a patrol car would undoubtedly deter drivers, she sought action to address this. Inspector Clothier confirmed that he was aware of the issue which was compounded by large groups congregating in open spaces in the area. He assured Mrs Larkin that steps had been taken to escalate action via a staged response under “Operation Crackdown”.

- 4.16** Mrs Edna Ferrier, Chairman of the Rope Walk Residents Association addressed the meeting on the same issue stating residents in Rope Walk and Ferry Road had reported anti-social driving through “Operation Crackdown” to no effect. She therefore questioned the value of this initiative. Another problem in this area was around inconsiderate parking which in her opinion would result in a serious accident one day. It was noted that part of the problem was that if a vehicle was taxed and insured there were no grounds for its removal.
- 4.17** The Chair stated that the Police had provided quarterly crime statistics to the Joint Eastern Arun Area Committee. This had been valuable, and he questioned why this information was no longer issued. In response the Commissioner stated a new national system of providing this information was being developed. It was noted that local statistical information was still available on line.
- 4.18** Mr Alan Humphreys of the Littlehampton Allotment and Gardens Association (LALGA), stated that so called low level crime was frequently experienced and reported on the allotments via 101. The experience of LALGA members was that these were not being taken seriously and that their losses were being ignored.
- 4.19** The Commissioner agreed that the 101-reporting system was flawed and stated that she would be raising this again with senior Officers at her monthly meeting with them at the end of the week. She assured residents that their reports were being correctly recorded and urged residents to continue to report incidents and to use the online system if they could.
- 4.20** Residents of Albert Road cited incidents of vandalism to vehicles parked on the street here and in Gloucester Road which had been reported to no effect and despite assurances that the Police would attend. The lack of enforcement action was considered to be encouraging this activity with groups congregating in the area causing a disturbance prompting further concerns that drugs were involved. This activity appeared to be evolving into a trend and the lack of enforcement meant that the problem continued. Inspector Clothier sought to reassure these residents that the Police had taken these reports seriously and were acting on the information received. This involved working closely with other agencies, which would take time.
- 4.21** Acknowledging the concerns that had been raised by residents, businesses and local groups around the lack of response to reporting the Commissioner stated that whilst there was room for improvement, Police Officers did an amazing Job. She would however be raising this with Senior Officers. She urged residents to use the “999” emergency number to report a crime when it was happening and accepted that the Police needed to do more to get this message out. She also drew residents’ attention to the “Crimestoppers” service as another means of reporting incidents.

4.22 In conclusion the Commissioner expressed her appreciation to public for taking the time to attend the meeting and stated that if it was helpful she would be happy to return.

4.23 Bringing the meeting to a close, the Chair thanked the Commissioner, Inspector Clothier and the public for their attendance.

The meeting closed at 7.40pm.