



Distribution: NHW Forum members, Area Co-ordinators,
Sup. Toby Davies, C/I Ryan Doyle, Insp. Shaun Kenneally, Sgts. Charlie Morris
& Dave Monkton, Neighbourhood PCs, PCSOs & PCMO Donna Woolway.

Torrige District Neighbourhood Watch

Notes of the Neighbourhood Watch Open Meeting held on Wednesday 14th June 2017 at 7.15pm in the Winkleigh Community Centre

The meeting was opened by Tom Carrick (Torrige District NHW Chair) who requested one minute's silence in respect of the ongoing London tower block fire tragedy where a number of deaths had already been confirmed and several people were still unaccounted for. Tom then welcomed everybody and thanked the local co-ordinators for their assistance in setting up the hall and organising the refreshments. He then handed over to John Bowers, who is our Area Co-ordinator for the Winkleigh area and who would be chairing the meeting for the rest of the evening.

John started the proceedings by asking the Forum and Police Officers present, Tom Carrick (Chair), David Braziel (Deputy Chair & DaCCWA Rep.), Doug Langley (Treasurer), Mike Jackson (Secretary), Barry Jenkins and PFCSO Sandra Brown to introduce themselves and state their positions.

John then introduced Karen Mellodew from the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner.

Karen explained that her actual role with the PCC is "Performance and Customer Service Manager", which covers the monitoring of Police activity, complaints and how they are dealt with, building an evidence base and best practises. Overseeing out of court settlements and again building an evidence base and reviewing whether they are being used correctly. She monitors all the teams' performances, sees all correspondence received and sees that it is directed to the most appropriate section to be dealt with. Mediation is also a major aspect of the job – bringing parties together to resolve issues to achieve the best outcomes. Karen also manages the volunteer scheme which covers the independent prisoner visits to check on welfare and rights issues.

By way of background, the OPCC replaced the old Police Authority which was a panel made up from mainly Councillors, together with a number of independent members. As the PCC is elected by the public it is hoped that there would be more empathy for public feelings and their aspirations. Alison Hernandez is our second PCC, having been elected when Tony Hogg's period of office came to an end and he did not seek re-election, for family reasons. Tony was a formal naval officer and largely achieved the successful setting up of the structure of the OPCC. Although Tony Hogg, was a Conservative Party member, he did to his great credit run the job in an apolitical and none partisan manner. Alison is more of a political person but is fully aware of the personal and sensitive issues which the Office deals with. However, both were very focused on getting the very best out of the Police on our behalf.

The Office functions through four teams and overall running costs are now less than those of the previous Police Authority. There is a Commissioning and Partnership Team which deals with drug and alcohol issues etc. They deal with the examination of prosecutions, rehabilitation of offenders and outcomes and are in contact with eighty-eight different agencies which are involved across the systems at different levels. More victims now have access to support throughout their experiences. Child sexual exploitation is the most recent aspect which has come under their remit. One avenue

which is being actively pursued is in “early intervention” which is being targeted at new or early offenders before they get established criminal careers, with the intention of creating financial savings by reducing criminal re-activity and all the additional costs that this entails. Modern Day Slavery issues which have come to prominence recently have received a funding allocation from the Government which is being processed through the OPCC.

The actual role which Karen fulfils as “Performance and Customer Service Manager”, covers the monitoring of Police activity, complaints and how they are dealt with, building an evidence base and best practise. Overseeing out of court settlements and again building an evidence base and reviewing whether they are being used correctly. She monitors all the teams’ performances, sees all correspondence received and sees that it is directed to the most appropriate section to be dealt with. Mediation is also a major aspect of the job – bringing parties together to resolve issues to achieve the best outcomes. Karen also manages the volunteer scheme which covers the independent prisoner visits to check on welfare and rights issues.

The OPCC is charged with producing an annual report on how the Police have performed over the previous twelve months. The PCC is also able to challenge the political funding formula which the Chief Constable is not able to do. Karen mentioned that she was responsible for spotting the error in the funding calculation which led to a £15 million saving for Devon and Cornwall. This year their Office is the national lead in lobbying the Government about alcohol pricing and a minimum unit price level. They are also targeting the people who deliberately get drunk before going out for the evening by introducing the “Challenge at the Door” campaign whereby club doormen are provided with breathalysers and anybody failing the test is refused entry to the club. This is proving to be very successful so far.

The PCC acknowledges that the 101 Service is not perfect but over the last 12 months waiting times have actually been halved. 90% of calls are now dealt with in under 10 minutes but the service continues to be monitored and the Chief Constable is still under pressure to improve it further. The Firearms Licensing section is currently under review of its systems following numerous complaints from the public, many of which involve long delays.

The OPCC also promotes the good work that the Police do by holding events across the area in the summer months enabling the public to meet with them. Major areas of concern raised in a recent public survey came out surprisingly as:

1. Connectivity with the local police team
2. Problems with the 101 phone service.
3. Closure of the front office at many police stations.

The recently published Police and Crime Policy focused on four main areas:

1. Reducing crime and keeping people safe.
2. Supporting victims and strengthening Victim Support
3. Safeguarding.
4. Making sure that the Police Service is as efficient as possible. This will be achieved by the addition of an extra 100 officers and with civilians taking on some roles which will then release officers back into the front line.

The Policy also promises to be Informative, Responsive, Accessible and Supportive of needs.

Delivery of the Policy is in the hands of the Police and the PCC will monitor development.

The PCC has also recently been tasked with involvement in the Police complaints process. The public are sometimes concerned when they find that complaints are investigated by other Police Officers.

To allay some of these concerns the PCC will now get involved whenever there is an appeal against a judgement decision.

Karen stated that the PCC is able to lobby Government, as seen last Autumn with the funding review and is also able to involve other organisations by joining in partnerships.

With the main outline of the work having been covered, Karen opened up the meeting to take questions.

Q. What is the ratio of funding that the PCC distributes for front line Police services?

A. The funding which goes to Devon & Cornwall Police is £182 million of which 2% goes to cover Commissioned Services such as Safeguarding, Sexual Offence Support and Domestic Abuse.

Q. In Torridge we rely on our PCSOs even though their role has changed over the years. If there is a cut in their numbers it will take the heart out of the Police Force as we know it. What is the PCC going to do about this situation? Tom went on to mention that he had recently attended the Devon and Cornwall 50th. Anniversary celebration of their amalgamation. He had the opportunity of speaking with the CC for 10-15 minutes and raised the subjects of PCSOs, 101 service and loss of front offices at Police Stations. The CC listened and thanked him for the conversation.

A. Karen acknowledged that, particularly in the rural areas, PCSOs were relied on and did an excellent job. However, the PCC is not able to direct the Chief Constable (CC) on how he deploys his staff. The CC feels that by reducing the PCSO pool it will enable there to be more PCs and give better responses. There are a number of options being considered, one of which is focusing PCSOs in the rural areas. When a decision has been made it will be published.

Q. Many people don't use the Victim Suite due to their fears. Does going there actually help, rather than going to the police Station?

A. Sex offending is massively under-reported. Those who wish to prosecute will have their cases vigorously pursued. Complex cases can often take up to 18 months to reach court. Special sex offence lawyers are now part of the team in a bid to try to speed up the process. Other agencies, such as the Devon Rape Support, can be approached for help and support but cases reported to them are not automatically referred to the Police, it is at the discretion of the victim. H.M. Inspectorate has recently raised questions about the recording of crimes. If a victim currently doesn't want to pursue the case, then it is not recorded. In these cases, what does the victim hope to achieve? It might be that the crime could be logged, but tagged as no actions. Again, would this help the victim? Whether pursued or not, the victim will be fully supported.

Q. Is there a strategy for police Officers to visit an area as a matter of routine?

A. The PCC has asked the CC to produce a Connectivity Plan which addresses this question, and respond by the Autumn.

Q. The PCC lobbied Government for additional funding to cover rural policing without success. The public we meet ask "What is the point of the PCC?" and whilst the PCSOs have public support, this does not apply to the PCC.

A. The PCC is trying to integrate with the public and puts regular articles in the Western Morning News. There is also an in-house publicity team which tries to maintain contact. Social media is increasingly used as this connects easily with the younger generations, but this is not at the expense of traditional avenues which continue to be used.

- Q.** 100 extra Police Officers were promised. How many have actually been achieved?
- A.** Approx. 40 have come on stream with more still in the pipeline. These are front-line officers.
- Q.** People in Winkleigh like to see officers on the beat. Is this likely to happen again?
- A.** The role of the PCSO is under review as is the concept of villages having their own dedicated PCSO, which equates back to the role of the 'village bobby'.
- A comment was made that as there is very little crime in Winkleigh, a beat officer is not needed.
 - As most crimes now don't happen 'in the street', but 'in the home' e.g. domestic abuse and other safeguarding issues, this is a dilemma which still needs to be overcome.
- Q.** When a Speed Watch is carried out, wouldn't it be more effective if the exercise was covert rather than warning signs having to be put out?
- A.** It is a health and safety requirement that dictates that warning signs are used. The safety of our volunteers is paramount. Speed Watch is an educational programme with 3 stages which apply in a 12-month period. The first time that an offence is logged, a polite letter is sent. It does not quote the offending speed. The second time that the person is "caught" a strong warning letter is hand delivered to the persons home by a Police Officer. The third time it happens a record is made on the Police National Computer so that if the person is then caught again, anywhere in the country, the warnings will be shown up.
- Sandra mentioned that prosecution has been proven to be not an effective deterrent.
 - In the 10 years that she has been involved with Speed Watch, the offending rate has gone up from 10% to nearer 30%.
- Q.** When Speed Watch is being carried out can other offences such as mobile phone use and no seat belt, be reported?
- A.** They can be reported but it can't be guaranteed that any action will be taken due to staffing priorities.
- Q.** Can we request a 'drink driving' sweep be undertaken?
- A.** Again, this would be down to a matter of staff resources. If this was thought to be a particular problem in the area, the local Police should be made aware of this.
- Q.** Are the Police always aware of when local community events are taking place?
- A.** The Police rely on being informed about local events by local people and when known they will make an effort to have a presence, albeit for just a short time.
- There is a recently introduced initiative with Community Link Officers being established. Eleanor Tanner is the officer for Torridge. If you let her know the details of your events, she will try to arrange for a Police presence. The local Beat Team can also be contacted via the Police website.
- Q.** Is it possible to reply to ALERT messages which have been originated by the Police.
- A.** Some messages have a respond button at the bottom of the message which takes you to a formatted reply page.
- Q.** The impression from the Crime Sheets is that there are no crimes in Winkleigh. However, in the first 5 months of this year the Police records show 12 crimes.
- A.** All crimes are not shown on the Crime Sheets, whereas the Police figures cover everything.

Q. Sandra was asked who would be covering her position whilst she was away on sick leave.

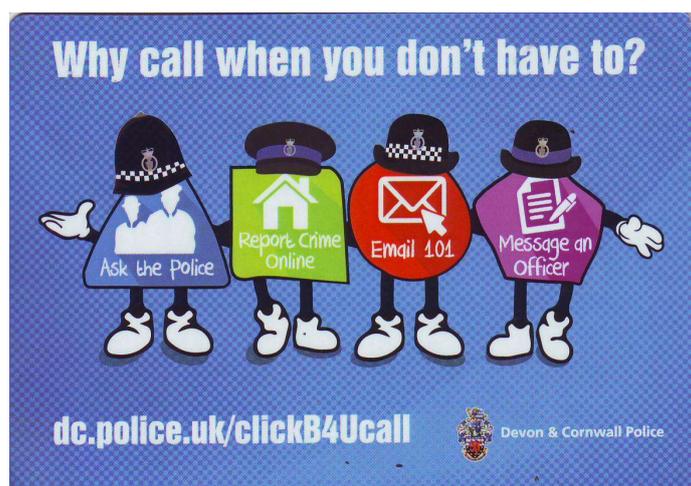
A. Her colleagues would be standing in to fill the gap.

Q. Who owns the visibility display which is in front of some properties, Highways or the homeowner?

A. You need to check the property title deeds for the definitive answer.

Comments

- The PCC will be instigating a comprehensive spending review in the near future.
- There are far too many signs of all descriptions on roads which can be dangerous and lead to complacency.
- Barry mentioned that it would be helpful for a few more volunteers to help with the local Speed Watch team in Winkley, if anybody was interested and had time to spare.
- The general public does not have the right to use traffic cones on the road and the highway outside your property does not belong to you. It was mentioned that Parish Councils were authorised to remove unauthorised cones.
- Backing up Karen's comments about the various different ways that we now have for contacting the Police, Sandra produced a number of fridge magnets reminders for members to take away. A copy is printed below:



With no further questions forthcoming, Tom thanked everyone for coming and for joining in to make it a very interesting and informative meeting. The meeting closed at 8.50 p.m.

Our next Neighbourhood Watch Open Meeting will be on:

Thursday 14 September 2017 at Appledore Football Club, starting at 7.15 pm

Note 1: *The format of these Notes differs from previously, following feedback and suggestions made in the recent coordinator questionnaire. The request was for more informality at the meetings and to not have published the "apologies for absence" which we received. Nor have we published the details of the attendees. We will still ask for attendees' details as these may be needed should a venue need to be evacuated due to an emergency and it will also give the Forum an indication of who is actually going to meetings.*