

Woking Crime Summit – 26th March – Q&A Session

Q1. Chris Rowsell, West Byfleet/Pyrford NHW – I don't have a question, just an observation - it is disappointing that the overall improvement in performance is marred by an increase in burglary. I commend the work of Inspector John Davies and his team.

A1. PCC – thank you for raising this issue. I would invite all residents to get involved in their local Neighbourhood Watch.

Q2. Chairman, Shah Jahan Mosque, Woking – Can you explain how the additional 2% of council tax that we have had to pay this year is spent.

A2. PCC – 2% equates to approximately £2million. Surrey Police has a budget gap of £30million. This additional 2% effectively equates to wages for 50 members of staff. I don't know what specifically it will be spent on but that is the equivalent.

Cllr Liz Bowes – Surrey County Council will spend the additional funds on three main areas; one third will be spent on education which is a major expenditure for SCC; one third on adult social care which is a major issue and growing; one third will be spent on other things such as highways, libraries, youth work.

Q3. St John's Resident – I am very happy with the service I receive from Surrey Police. If the budget decreases then the service we receive will decrease. What can residents do to help get a fair share of funding from Government?

A3. PCC – lobby your local Member of Parliament. This is the best way of raising the issue to the Government. Consider becoming a volunteer. We are not complacent about our funding situation – we are collaborating with Sussex and other regional forces in a number of areas. We are cutting costs in a number of areas that the public may not see e.g. firearms, roads policing, dogs and specialist detectives (we now have a Regional Organised Crime Unit). A project is underway to merge the contact centres for police, fire and ambulance in Surrey and Sussex. If it was up to me then I would recommend an amalgamation of the Surrey and Sussex forces.

Ray Morgan – A lot of joint working is taking place between the police and local authorities. I would encourage the public to engage, participate and volunteer. The community will get us out of this problem.

Q4. NHW Coordinator, Sheerwater – We have lost our police panel – we have no way of meeting with the police and no longer have a link with them.

A4. Insp. Davies – we recently carried out a review of community engagement. One reason why we have scaled back on meetings is because of the lack of attendance. It isn't best use of my officers' time if they are attending meetings where only a handful of residents attend. Engagement is very important and we now hold Local Policing Boards in each area. I will make sure that we get staff over to Sheerwater to discuss issues.

Ray Morgan – We will make sure any issues are addressed – sharing information is key.

Q5. Tony Kremer, NHW Woking – how does Surrey County Council (SCC) support what the PCC and local councils do especially around issues of community safety?

A5. Cllr Bowes – I would advise that the best thing to do is to take a look at the SCC website which gives a vast amount of information on what SCC does. We feed in and link to local councils. We reach out to the community via the Local Committee. I would invite residents to attend the Local Committee to discuss any issues.

Cllr Kingsbury – in June Woking will be the first local authority to form a joint Local Committee with SCC. We will have joint responsibilities.

PCC – SCC do all sorts of things that the public may not be aware of e.g. they provide the Youth Support Service which works to prevent young people entering the criminal justice system by way of youth offending diversion schemes. They also have a supported families' project which helps troubled children and parents that can't manage. Surrey Fire and Rescue Service have a youth engagement scheme which helps divert young people from trouble.

Ray Morgan – We get involved in safeguarding issues that can't be made public e.g. hidden crimes like domestic abuse.

Q6. Reflex, Woking – We are concerned about the loss of Youth PCSOs. It takes a special type of person to do this job and we are going to feel the loss, especially at Reflex. There will be a risk of an increase in offending. Young people will see it as being let down by another group of adults.

A6. PCC – Youth PCSOs work specifically in schools and youth centres where they engage with young people. The problem is budget cuts. There will be 60 new police constables in neighbourhoods across the county and the aspiration is that local PCs and PCSOs will take responsibility for the work of the Youth PCSOs. It will be best if that role is localised as the officers will be more aware of local issues and can engage on a more regular basis. We need an adequate number of officers to enforce the law and catch criminals. The local PCSOs will become more involved in all local issues. We can review the decision in due course if it doesn't appear to be working.

Ray Morgan – we don't want to lose the good work that Reflex is doing. Both Insp. Davies and I will look into this.

Q7. Martha, Woking Youth Voice – I want to understand the People's Priority 'Putting Victims at the heart of the Criminal Justice System' – how are the priorities set? Should it not be more focussed on the offender as they are innocent until proven guilty?

A7. The CJ system is about finding out the truth. We want the victim to be looked after properly as it can be a traumatic experience to go through the system. The public wanted us to provide a better service to victims.

Q8. Margaret Barron, Maybury – There seems to be an inconsistency in police pursuing criminals. They seem to cherry pick who to help and who not to help even if they have suffered similar crimes e.g. sexual assault. Procedures should be followed to the letter – that is what we want.

A8. This is the number 6 priority – uncompromising in the standards you expect from your police – you are right, there should be consistency. The Chief Constable is putting in place specific systems and procedures around sexual assault. Supervisors will intervene on cases. Reporting of such incidences has increased which suggests that victims feel more confident in reporting.

Insp. Davies – We put in the same amount of effort and scrutiny into each crime that is reported. We provide evidence based responses and strive for excellence. I am confident that we provide the same level of response to each crime reported. I can speak about this specific incident outside the meeting.

Q9. Maureen Thomas – How are the police panel meetings advertised – the recent meeting in Knaphill wasn't advertised very well and the local NHW didn't know it was taking place. NHW is a good way to get information out to the local community.

A9. Insp. Davies – all meetings are advertised via Twitter, Facebook, Surrey Police website and posters.

Q10. As a young person how would I get involved in working with the police and helping with community issues?

A10. Insp. Davies – we would welcome any support and encourage you to get in contact via the website.

PCC – Surrey Police Volunteers Team can give information on voluntary roles. Contact my office if you are interested. We are looking at possibly reinstating police cadets.

Q11. Rebecca Smith – How does Woking BC carry out community engagement? What areas are at risk if the police and community do not work together?

A11. Cllr Kingsbury – I would encourage participation via Windows on Woking which can be found on the Woking BC website. It gives the public an opportunity to raise any issues direct to their local councillor. Surrey County Council has a task group on how to engage with the younger community.

PCC – We cannot predict what will be at risk but we need everyone to do their bit in bringing the community together. There are a lot of voluntary opportunities.

Insp. Davies – we all have a part to play and I would encourage you to get involved.

Q12. David McPhee – I would be interested to know how the police and local authority can better deal with problems in the town centre on weekend evenings. Is there too many night time establishments open?

A12. Insp. Davies – there are never too many places open – we look at any premises causing problems. The police and Woking BC work closely together to look at licensing and other issues.

Ray Morgan – legislation can get in the way of tackling some problem. Promoting good behaviour is the key to tackling some issues.