

POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

12th June 2013

Introduction

This report sets out a summary of the commitments I have undertaken since the last Police and Crime Panel meeting held on 26th March 2013. I write a weekly blog which provides a brief overview for the public of what I have been up to. This is published on my website (www.wiltshire-pcc.gov.uk) and the content of these blogs is copied below for the Panel's information.

OUT AND ABOUT ACROSS WILTSHIRE AND SWINDON

Posted: Monday 25th March 2013

Friday 15 March

It might have been cold and wet, but that was no obstacle to the Bemerton Heath Street Watch. I joined them on their evening patrol around the estate. These schemes are a demonstration of community. As well as speaking to people as we went around, they were also able to report things that needed repair, so it is also about pride in a community. I know there are schemes in Swindon and Salisbury, but no one seems to have total oversight. I hope we can support these volunteers through the commissioning process.

Saturday 16 March

As part of a wider campaign, Rotary in Swindon put on an autism awareness event. I'm aware of many of the issues through my work in the Community Foundation, but it was an opportunity to refresh some knowledge, especially around the Autism Alert Card which is produced by the National Autistic Society and supported by Wiltshire Police. The take up is quite small so the scheme does need everyone's support.

Tuesday 19 March

I was invited to spend the day with Wiltshire Probation Trust, as they took me through its work. The morning took the form of a workshop, with a case study of an offender's path through the process, which gave me a clarity to the complexity of the process and the passion of the staff involved. I also had the opportunity to meet those involved in Community Payback and volunteer mentors, both of which are very much on message with the Police and Crime Plan.

In the evening the One Swindon Board met. It was Swindon Borough Council's current leader Rod Bluh's (who is standing down) last meeting of something which he has been a great supporter. It is early days, but I think the Office of the PCC needs to support Community Budgets. Just how that will play out in practice, we will see in time, but I think the development of Localities and the language of 'Safer Neighbourhood Teams' are core. I look forward to working with David Renard in the future.

Wednesday 20 March

Another day out, this time a briefing by the Army on its operations in Wiltshire. The plain accounts for 11 per cent of the area of our county, and with the increase in personnel coming to both Tidworth and Lyneham there are new challenges which we face. This is not helped by the withdrawal of most of the MOD policing of their estate, a matter raised on our behalf by MP John Glen in Parliament. There is a variety of crime, and environmental damage, that needs to be addressed, and much of it from people from out of our county. I think this will be a discussion point over the coming months, between the MOD and their partners and the Constabulary and OPCC.

LAUNCH OF THE PLAN THIS WEEK

Posted: Thursday 28th March 2013

Friday 22 March

This morning I visited Neston, near Corsham. I attended the village's community cafe for a coffee and chat. The community officers were there and, as so often, they were well thought of and fully engaged in the concerns of the village. These included speeding and some low level anti-social behaviour. I'm looking forward to an update meeting on Speed Watch revival.

The new High Sheriff was sworn in at County Hall, and I was pleased to be invited. The High Sheriff's main duties include attendance at royal visits in the county and support for Her Majesty's High Court Judges when on circuit. These days, however, High Sheriffs play an increasingly active and supportive role within their counties. This can be in relation to the police and other emergency services as well as lending encouragement to public sector agencies, such as the probation and prison services and to voluntary sector organisations involved in crime reduction and social cohesion. I look forward to working with William Wildbore-Smith during the coming year.

Tuesday 26 March

Only a few days now until the Police and Crime Plan is published. We have had around 130 responses to the consultation, and while the comments will be published on the website, I have not been able to answer them all. I did however have the opportunity to feedback on the helpful comments made by the Police and Crime Panel at their meeting this morning at Monkton Park in Chippenham.

In the afternoon I had a visit from the Princes Trust. The charity works with young people between the ages of 13 - 30 who are not in education, employment or training, all people we want to engage with. They have worked with the Life project in Swindon, so I look forward to looking at their plans.

This was followed by a return visit to Swindon Advocacy Movement (SAM), a charity which aims to help empower people with learning disabilities. As it is reported that few crimes are identified as being disability hate crimes, I was keen to find out what those with a disability thought. All five of those at the meeting had been the victim of crime and all believed it was because of their disability. It was frightening when they suggested that the reporting of a crime "hurt more than the crime". There is a great deal of work to do in raising awareness and supporting reporting.

Wednesday 27 March

I met the Chief Crown Prosecutor for Wessex earlier in the week, and she explained changes that her organisation were making in the region (Hampshire, Wiltshire and Dorset), so it was good to hear from the Witness Care Unit how they think the changes will affect their work and the victims and witness. It reminded me also that I need to find out from the Courts Service about where they are going to hold trials in Wiltshire and whether the many representations made any difference to their plans. I have grave concerns that our judicial system is becoming remote from the victims and witnesses, and if that is the perception, if not the case, it re-enforces the 'why should we bother to report crime' view.

Thursday 28 March

Launch of the Police and Crime Plan - now the delivery! This is the exciting bit and I'm really looking forward to reading the delivery plans that come forward from the Constabulary, the partners and others. This is a new process and one which I believe will produce great dividends for our community, so long as we remove obstacles and breakdown silos. The money just isn't there for duplication and good value for the public pound will only be achieved when every organisation, and those who work in them, recognises this.

Prime partners in this endeavour are Swindon and Wiltshire local authorities and I always look forward to my monthly meetings with the leaders.

START OF APRIL

Posted: Thursday 4th April 2013

Tuesday 2 April

I really hope everyone had a peaceful Easter. I certainly had a rest but this was enforced due to a tooth ache.

Looking at the diary for this week – it looks a little like 'after the Lord Mayor's show'. The launch of the Police and Crime Plan last week was such a milestone in this office and we now move into working on the delivery of priorities within the plan.

Wednesday 3 April

It is interesting that since the plan was launched, the office has started to receive enquiries about funding various projects that seek to delivery the priorities. We are not at the level that Hampshire has experienced where I understand some 50 applications have already been received and in Gloucestershire some grants have already been given. That said we undertook to launch the £1 million Innovation Fund around mid April. Organisations that help reduce crime, anti-social behaviour and re-offending in Wiltshire and Swindon will be able to apply for funds.

I felt very privileged to be allowed to observe a meeting of Al-Anon, which is a support group for friends and family of alcoholics. Everyone's story was very different but what was very striking was that they were all victims of the illness of alcoholism just as much as the drinkers themselves. I have never heard of this international organisation before and I suppose part of this role as PCC is to connect these sorts of organisations with others working in similar or related fields. I wonder if the alcohol agencies working with Swindon and Wiltshire councils think to refer family and friends of their clients to organisations such as this.

Thursday 4 April

Last night the Chief Executive, Chief Constable and myself met up with a similar team from Avon and Somerset. Our task was to work on a generic collaboration framework for the whole of the south west region. There is no doubt that, while each force needs to protect its individual identity, joint working across the region is where we can all achieve greater economies of scale. I hope our work will find favour with the others when we meet later in the month.

Today I am visiting Swindon West neighbourhood team at the De Vere hotel in Swindon. I always enjoy getting out of the office and having the opportunity to meet members of the public to find out about their concerns in their local area.

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH AND ROTARY

Posted: Friday 12th April 2013

Friday 5 April

I am firmly of the opinion that a strong Neighbourhood Watch (NHW) scheme is an essential tool in the prevention of crime. I'm also aware that it is an independent organisation and does not belong to either the police or the Community Safety Partnerships. It is against this background that it was good to meet with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Wiltshire and Swindon NHW and talk about the future development of the organisation in the county.

Monday 8 April

Part of the job is to speak about the role, and today I visited Salisbury Rotary Club to do just that. Actually it is very useful for me as it make me sit down and reflect on the role. There is still concern over politics coming into policing but the reality is that it is hard to see it!

Tuesday 9 April

St Francis School in Taw Hill invited me to meet the school council (years five and six). I was interested to hear their views on the police, gangs and crime in general. It is pleasing that they feel safe to go out to play in that part of Swindon, but also that they had a good understanding of how to keep safe, both when out and in the home. Although they told me about some mixed message from the police and fire services - I'll have to share this with the Chiefs when I see them next!

Wednesday 10 April

The first quarterly visit by Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary, and as ever it was a great discussion around policing and performance. Their role has changed but I do feel that they are supportive of PCC and certainly understood the direction I have set for Wiltshire in the Police and Crime Plan.

Thursday 11 April

The Chief Constable has started his internal staff engagement briefings to the whole Force and over the coming weeks will be meeting his staff across 30 meetings. I hope to make a lot of these as the diary allows so I can answer questions from staff on my role. I was impressed with the presentation and it was very supportive of the Police and Crime Plan.

VOLUNTEERING AND AWARDING GRANTS

Posted: Thursday 18th April 2013

Friday 12 April

Today I was at the Community Foundation for Wiltshire and Swindon to chair the grants panel. We were distributing money raised by the police through the sale of lost property and similar. We gave out grants totaling £26,899 to ten charities. My fellow panel members are past, current and potential future High Sheriff's of the county. I hope with the current High Sheriff to have the opportunity to visit some of the projects we've funded.

Saturday 13 April

Back to work today. I was at a Chief's briefing predominantly for members of the Special Constabulary. As

ever it was good to meet these volunteers and I was also especially pleased to be able to give a 'certificate of independent patrol' to one Special Constable.

Monday 15 April

On my travels today I passed the Community Speed Watch team in Shrewton and stopped for a chat. They tell me that around eight per cent of the people passing through when they are on duty are over the speed limit, not always by a great deal but some are definitely 'tanking' it. Later in the week I had a meeting with the project lead who is preparing the business case for a more resilient back-up to the whole of Community Speed Watch.

The national Early Intervention Foundation was launched today and I was pleased to be join others on BBC Wiltshire radio to support this work. I think it links in very well with the troubled families work in Wiltshire and Swindon and it's really concerning to think that some behaviours are learnt during our very early years.

Tuesday 16 April

In the afternoon I spoke at a fellowship meeting at the Pilgrim Centre in Swindon. It was an opportunity to share my vision with this group who meet every week and discuss social and local issues.

Wednesday 17 April

It might not sound terribly exciting but at the regional meeting of PCCs and Chief Constables we agreed the governance arrangements for current and future collaboration projects across the region. This is something that had defeated police authorities for many years and I am very pleased that as Wiltshire and Swindon PCC I will have a strong and equal voice with other partners.

Thursday 18 April

A day packed with meetings. Firstly at Develop in Chippenham which coordinates and brokers volunteering opportunities across Wiltshire, followed by an event for National Stalking Awareness Day run by Hometruths called 'Looking over my shoulder'. There are more than 53,000 reported offences of stalking every year nationally and only two per cent result in a custodial sentencing. Seventy-two per cent of victims are unhappy with the court outcomes. So there is a massive amount of work to be done in this area.

From Chippenham I rushed to Swindon to meet the Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Justice who was visiting to hear about rehabilitation work in Wiltshire and my aspirations under the Police and Crime Plan.

In the afternoon it was back to back meetings, covering Speed Watch, crime prevention, risk management and ended the day with blogging.

VISIT TO TWO SCHOOLS THIS WEEK

Posted: Monday 29th April 2013

Monday 22 April

Wiltshire Police Chief Constable Pat Geenty is hosting his Chief's briefings across the Force, aiming to see all staff and officers. I think there are 31 taking place, each lasting around one and a half hours. I have been lucky enough to have been invited along for the questions and answer sessions. This has been really useful for me and, I hope, the staff. I met some Special Constables in Swindon on Saturday and today I was at Headquarters in Devizes. My favourite question so far is "what is the point of Police and Crime Commissioners?"!

Today I was also very pleased to be included in the tributes and presentations to Dr Richard Riseley-Prichard by the Wiltshire Air Ambulance. After a distinguished career in the Royal Air Force (RAF), he has made an outstanding contribution to life in Wiltshire. He was the driving force in the establishment of the Wiltshire Air Ambulance and before that raised money the first scanner at the Princess Margaret Hospital in Swindon. It was a very happy event.

Tuesday 23 April

This morning I visited St John's school in Marlborough, meeting with four law classes. It was a really good morning – the students were very engaged, making extremely good points and having clearly looked at my Police and Crime Plan.

The following is a comment made by one of the students: "*After talking about current local policing, we discussed how the service could move forward in the future and it was suggested that building a presence on social media sites would provide easy attention from younger citizens as they are the largest proportion of social site users, which of course led to the discussion of Paris Brown and how people can avoid making mistakes such as hers online.*"

"It was genuinely a great experience to meet the person who is in charge of keeping the streets in our local area safe and even offering him a few of our own ideas on how he can continue to improve the way that the local area is policed."

Thursday 25 April

Remember 'Message in a bottle' by Police? Well the students at St Peter's School in Chippenham gave me lots of messages in a bottle as I visited them and other members of the Chippenham Young People's Parliament. They had sent in their comments as part of the consultation on the Police and Crime Plan, but I was able to answer some of their concerns first hand during this visit.

David Renard has now taken over as leader of Swindon Borough Council. I'm pleased that he was able to join Jane Scott, leader of Wiltshire Council, and I for our monthly get together, and will be in the future. We agreed our joint submission to the newly formed Early Intervention Foundation to be a pioneer. Excellent example of joint working.

MPS, SPECIALS AND CCTV

Posted: Thursday 2nd May 2013

Friday 26 April

It was good to catch up with the Swindon MPs and get further feedback around the sorts of thing people are talking to them about. Actually there were no surprises and it seems that their post bag mirrors mine - anti-social behaviour and concerns about violence in the town centre. In actual fact there are fewer incidents this year, so it is troubling that those that have happened have been so vicious.

Saturday 27 April

If the volunteer Special Constables are giving up their time to attend the Chief's Briefings I thought I should do the same, so it was at 5pm in Melksham today. These briefings are being very well received and I think both the Chief and I learnt quite a lot about being a special and their relationship with the regular police officers.

Monday 29 April

In the morning I visited the Calne CCTV operation. The standard and coverage of CCTV varies greatly across the county, but the set up in Calne was very impressive. The coverage and clarity of the images was very good and I had the opportunity to see it in operation 'driven' by some of the large number of volunteers who keep the operation going. I think that other towns in the county could learn from a visit.

An important part of this job for me is responding to the consultations that the government put out. This morning I was joined by a representative of the Force justice department and Victim Support as we went through the proposed Victim Charter. The comments will be on this website.

I also had an update on progress around video links between police stations and Courts so both officers and witness can give evidence without travelling around the county. I still have concerns over the listing of trials in the county, but have had no update from the court service following their consultation.

The day finished with the Commissioner's Monitoring Board, which is attended by chief officers. The Chief Constable tabled the first draft of his delivery plan against the Police and Crime Plan, so we will be working though that during the next couple of weeks.

Tuesday 30 April

First thing in the morning I met representative in Salisbury of a new charity called First Light Trust, which has a particular interest in the troubles suffered by soldiers returning from theatre and in particular members of the Territorial Army (TA). They are doing a lot up in Scarborough, but with the planned expansion of Tidworth I can't help feeling that there will be an increased need in our county.

Actual the flavour of the day was mental health, as I then went up to London to a briefing arranged by Lord Bradley on mental health and diversion from the criminal justice system. The event was specifically for PCCs, and was an opportunity to meet some of the deputies (I don't have one), but more importantly to be given more information about the sorts of problems there are for people with mental health problems who are rubbing up against the criminal justice system. One outcome was a series of questions to ask locally and the challenge our procedures and provision.

Wednesday 1 May

We are nearly at the end of the Chief's Briefings with three today, but I also had time to meet Families First which is doing good work with troubled families in Wiltshire. They have been going for coming up for a year

and have been supporting around 75 families who have young members very close to being involved in crime. It will be interesting to hear more when they have good measures of outcomes from their work. Work today also continued on setting up a business forum, but before that we will be doing a survey of business in the county to find out their experience of crime. This will give me a base line for the future and also help develop a strategy around crime which affects our local businesses.

Thursday 2 May

I'm taking some leave with an extended Bank Holiday weekend, so back to work on Wednesday 8 May with a packed day.

MEETING JUNIOR WARDENS AT DROVE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Posted: Friday 10th May 2013

Wednesday 8 May

As predicted it was an extraordinary busy day with a 6am briefing with Wiltshire Police Chief Constable Pat Geenty before executing some warrants with officers in Swindon as part of Operation Harness. Op Harness is a long-term collaborative operation designed to increase engagement with local communities and incorporate on-going initiatives focusing on different elements of policing.

On the warrant we executed we managed to wake up rather more tenants in the house than the housing officer who was with us thought should be there. As well as the operation in Swindon, warrants were issued at residential addresses in Trowbridge. As a result of these warrants:

- 22 addresses were searched
- 13 people were arrested – reasons for arrests included suspicion of handling stolen goods, possession with intent to supply class A and B drugs, possession of drugs, money laundering, cultivation of cannabis and possession of firearm (believed to be a stun gun)
- Drugs were seized at 13 addresses
- Two hydroponics set ups (used for the cultivation of cannabis) were dismantled
- Approximately £2,000 cash seized
- Op Harness leaflets were delivered to approximately 1,000 addresses

During the rest of the morning I attended a number of meetings and in the afternoon I visited the junior wardens at Drove Primary School in Swindon. This is an afterschool club run closely with neighbourhood police officers and Police and Community Support Officers (PCSOs) offering lots of activities for young people around good citizenship. They were getting their scrap books up together with photos of their visits to see the helicopter at Devizes, the ambulance service and graffiti cleaning. The relationship between the young people and the officers was extremely good and I hope that their respect will rub off on their peers.

The relationships between my office and Wiltshire Council are very strong and I was pleased to catch up with leader Jane Scott and her senior team following the recent elections.

In the evening I chaired the annual general meetings for the Filling Station and Broadgreen Breakfast Club in Swindon not as PCC but in my continuing role as a trustee for those charities. I was very pleased that a number of the town centre policing team came to the meeting along with around 10 users of the service so as a consultation exercise on the service provided it was extremely useful to everyone.

Thursday 9 May

I had a meeting with Victim Support as I continue to work on the delivery of the elements relating to supporting victims in the Police and Crime Plan. I am also looking forward shortly to learning more about the victim support service within the courts system. In the evening I attended the annual celebration of the Wiltshire and Swindon Community Foundation held at Larkhill. The Foundation distributes funds from the sale of lost property so it will be a good opportunity to meet both some of the supporters and beneficiaries of the charity.

Friday 10 May

Today I spent the day in London at the Centre for Justice Innovation. This was very much a fact-finding day around the development of Neighbourhood Justice Panels and the part they play in the greater spectrum of restoration justice. It was useful meeting and I am sure that as time goes on I will get more demands around this agenda.

SIX MONTHS IN OFFICE

Posted: Tuesday 28th May 2013

Tuesday 21 May

Keen readers of the blog will notice a gap for last week. This is because I took the week off as leave, which was very refreshing after the intensity of the first six months in office.

It is worth mentioning some of the provisions of the Queen's Speech that will have an effect. The key points are:

- Anti-social behaviour (ASB), Crime and Policing Bill
 - Replacing and condensing existing powers to deal with ASB into six faster and more effective powers.
 - Victims of ASB will have power to ensure action is taken to deal with persistent ASB through new Community Trigger
 - Victims will also have greater say in what form of sanction offender should receive through Community Remedy
 - Offence of owning / being in charge of a dog that is dangerously out of control to be extended to private places
 - New offence of 'possession for sale or transfer' to be created to help tackle illegal importation / exportation of firearms
 - Forced marriage to become a criminal offence
 - PCCs to have responsibility for commissioning of victims services
 - Police to prosecute uncontested minor offences of shoplifting
 - Statutory witness protection scheme to be extended to cover other vulnerable individuals
 - Magistrates Courts will have power removed to add additional days to a sentence of imprisonment in lieu of Victims Surcharge

- Offender Rehabilitation Bill
 - Supervision of offenders having served a custodial sentence of up to two years for a period of 12 months following their release
 - Drug abusing offenders would be required to attend treatment appointments
 - Offenders would be required to be tested for Class B drugs as well as Class A
 - Reforms to community orders and suspended sentence orders include:
 - Probation providers may require offenders to attend appointments or activities supporting their rehabilitation
 - Offenders would be required to seek permission before moving out of their local area (currently they are only required to give notification)

Wednesday 22 May

Today marks six months in office for me as PCC. No cake in the office (!) but I completed two early morning interviews with local radio stations. Significant milestones during this time include being the first PCC to appoint a Chief Constable, capping the policing element of local council tax for and consulting widely on my draft Police and Crime Plan before publishing the final version at the end of March.

Today I spent most of the day spent in Salisbury with colleagues from Wiltshire Council and catching up from leave.

It seems that the question of Police and Crime Commissioner mileage claims have been in the news. It may be that as a Chartered Accountant the correct interpretation of the rules seemed quite clear to me. The Inland Revenue Booklet 490 Employee Travel is our guidance and this gives examples of what is and is not allowed. We will also be using the approved revenue rates for mileage claims. I don't have either a car or driver provided and I'm using my own car running around the county to all the meetings and events I have to attend. The claims are posted on the website for all to see.

I'm also pleased that provisional accounts for the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) for last year show and under spend of the budget of in excess of £100k.

Thursday 23 May

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) is in today, reviewing the operational side of policing in a time of austerity. They are inspecting the force, but I'm confident that we are working, together, along the right lines and hope that they agree in their report.

Witnesses, who are often victims, are supported through the criminal justice process by both the Witness Care Unit, run by the police and the Witness Service. The Witness Service is provided by Victim Support at the court and operated by volunteers. I spend a couple of hours with the service in the Swindon Magistrates and Crown Courts. It gave me an opportunity to learn more about the relationship between the two services, but also to speak to witnesses who were in court being supported. A useful fact finding visits as background to the proposed Victim Pathway.

I had never heard of 'Neighbourhood Return' who came and presented their service. Essentially it is a charity which supports those who may 'wander' as 40,000 people do each year. Carers register people with memory problems who may go missing and the charity arrange other volunteers to make an initial search. Well worth further investigation.

Friday 24 May

Good to catch up with Jim Grant, the leader of the Labour group on Swindon Borough Council, and have a chat about Localities and public access to the police in Swindon.

Yet another charity I had never heard of is ROC, and the founder Debra Green came down to Gablecross in Swindon to introduce their work. They are national but have not yet done much in Wiltshire. The principle objective is around people of goodwill working together for safe communities, much the same as the Police and Crime Plan.

Angus Macpherson
**Police and Crime Commissioner
For Wiltshire and Swindon**