

## Keynsham Public Forum – 19<sup>th</sup> June 2019

### Question and Answer Summary

**Q: Will the new Bath Police Station opening soon be the same set up that ordinary residents will perceive as a police station?**

A: The new station at Bath will be the ground floor of Lewis House and will host the Neighbourhood Team and an Enquiry Desk for the public and will be a much more efficient use of public funds.

**Q: There has been some aggressive begging in Bath recently – there was a previous scheme possibly called ‘Kindness Kills’ – are there any plans to relaunch this?**

A: There have been multi agency discussions recently about this and there is a reluctance amongst some partners to return to that particular scheme due to the perceptions and connotations attached to it. It is recognised that the iconic nature of Bath encouraging the influx of tourists contributes to the increase in the begging community as there are new people in the city daily who may feel inclined to help them. Inter-agency work is ongoing to signpost people to appropriate help, a number of people living on the streets and begging have complex needs to address and agencies are considering the best way to help them. It is acknowledged as a complex issue that polarises communities – it affects trade for businesses and leaves some people feeling unsafe in their city and yet also at the heart of it is often mental health issues and alcohol/drug dependency and how to give people the best chance in life.

**Q: How many out of the 100 new officers will be assigned to the Inspector for BaNES?**

A: The new officers will form a team called Operation Remedy and will work across all the boundaries of Avon & Somerset – following the intelligence and deploying to where they are needed most.

**Q: The Home Office have now banned the holding of those with mental health issues in police cells – where do they go?**

A: In 2015 in Avon & Somerset we made the decision not to accept those detained under the Mental Health Act in the police cells as this often made things worse for them. Working with the Clinical Commissioning Group, beds within clinical settings were made available. There are only 6 of these beds across Avon & Somerset and more are required, work is ongoing to tackle this. The Constabulary also fund Mental Health nurses in the Communications Centre to ensure the police are able to make better informed decisions for individuals. This has all reduced the number of people who have found themselves in custody as a result of a mental health episode.

**Q: What is the police policy for those who exceed the 20 mph limit? Estimate that 90% exceed this but only seen 1 prosecution in 20 years.**

A: The PCC is a great supporter of education to tackle this issue and over 500 people have attended a speed awareness course as a result of being caught speeding. In Avon & Somerset it is very much a case of educate over prosecute and that is why there are overt, not covert cameras installed. Residents have often told the PCC how important speeding is as an issue to them and so the Constabulary have invested in 9 speed vans, 6 motorbikes and are the leading force in the country for issuing speeding fines. Road safety engineering and the Community Speedwatch scheme are also part of the investment by the Constabulary. It needs to become something society are critical of – like drink drivers – use of phones whilst driving and speeding have not yet become unacceptable to

society and this would have a huge impact if it changed. It is important to have signs and the police work closely with the town and parish councils to ensure as much is done on the roads to keep them safe as is possible.

Q: In terms of crime in this area, residents feel very safe but those who live near the A39 do not feel safe and are sure there will be a fatal accident on the road one day. The fear is that it will take something serious like that for any changes to be made – is there anything that can be done to prevent it? Not believed to be speeding that is the issue but lack of driving skills and dangerous driving.

A: It was noted that invariably interventions like this are down to funding. The police do work closely with the Council to look at areas that are dangerous. The PCC encouraged residents in the area to establish a Community Speedwatch to try to build an evidence base of incidents. The police will need to have incidents and near misses reported in order to know where to allocate their resources.

Q: It was good that you used the term 'our police force' – members of the public should therefore be concerned about the welfare of officers. The feeling is that the demand outweighs the resource. Particularly concerned after speaking to a dog handler who had to travel 200 miles to an incident and a traffic officer who was sent from Almondsbury to Bourton-on-the-water?

A: The Assistant Chief Constable thanked the residents for looking out for officers and acknowledged that officers can only look after the public if they are looking after themselves. There is now much more recognition internally of the stresses and strains of personal and professional situations that can affect officers. The Chief Constable of Avon & Somerset is very conscious of the support that might be needed and there are a range of support services in place and available to officers and staff. The Police Federation and Unison, the police staff union, are active in wellbeing activity and allowing respite to officers or looking at working arrangements. Traction in this area is increasing and is leading to people feeling able to be more open when they are struggling and feeling able to seek help. The PCC also commented that she hears regularly of appalling injuries that officers receive in the line of duty and that is a terrible place to be as a society, officers come to work to make a difference to people's lives – not to be abused.

Q: There are ongoing issues at Mead Lane – is it possible to include residents on any invites to local meetings please?

A: The Constabulary are aware of the ongoing issues between the boating community and residents there and have an active patrol plan and are enforcing breaches of legislation and ASB. It is an issue that wider partners are also involved in, related to the moorings and the way they are managed. The Council need to undertake some work on this. Residents are encouraged to report and inform the police of incidents as this informs the way the police deploy their resources. Residents will be invited to any community meetings held in relation to this area, along with partner agencies and the boating community.

Q: In the presentation crime figures were reported to be down – or is this the reporting of crime that is down? Are there any plans to encourage reporting? There is a big problem in Midsomer Norton with drugs and cars that residents are now reluctant to report as nothing ever happens.

A: It will always be the case that what is reported to police is different to the crime figures. Avon & Somerset are very good at recording incidents, not all reports to the police are a crime. The police will always actively encourage people to come forward and report all incidents, as discussed under previous questions, this will form the evidence base for where the police will deploy their assets, so if they are not informed of incidents they will be unaware of what is happening. The PCC made a

particular plea that if people are suffering from ASB or disorder please do report this. Reports can be made online, as well as by telephone or anonymously via Crimestoppers, or attend meetings with local officers and advise them in person. Open meetings with officers will be advertised on the police website.

**Q: Interested to hear about the mental health nurses in Comms – are these 24/7?**

A: They would be 24/7 if the PCC could afford it! However, there is not enough money so they are on duty until 10pm. There are also some nurses that are available for street triage to support officers on the street. The PCC advised that keeping the funding going with the clinical commissioning group for these posts is proving difficult.

**Q: Cyber crime and grooming of young people is very worrying and particularly scary when someone has flown in from Australia to meet a young person they have been grooming – assume the police can only get involved following intelligence from the community? What links do police have with Facebook/Twitter etc regarding access to personal accounts? How cooperative have they been?**

A: There is a National Cyber Crime Co-ordination Centre which works with the National Crime Agency, Forces and providers, although probably not quite enough is being done yet. There was the recent incident with the Met officers being denied access to a murder victim's Facebook which has gone to a trial in America and will take 4 months to resolve. The police have to find a way to work with the providers. The Government have given a grace period for providers to comply but if there is no change there is a plan to bring in legislation to force them to comply. In the meantime the police are working in schools to engage with young people and educate them in internet safety and to try to prevent them from engaging in dangerous activity online.

**Q: Following the very serious accident on Lansdown Lane 4 years ago there have recently been a number of occasions where cars have been pictured parking very dangerously at school pick up time – can anything be done?**

A: This will be passed to the local Neighbourhood Inspector who will look at a patrol plan to support the area.

**Q: As well as the Facebook element of crime which has been discussed already – there are also electronic scams and id theft/fraud – is this also a priority for police?**

A: Yes, this is a priority for the police, particularly in relation to the vulnerable members of society. Incidents are reported to Action Fraud who will triage and issue to the appropriate force to deal, often the perpetrators of these crimes are not in the same county (or often country) as their victims. The police recognise the significant stress and disruption this type of crime will have on people.

**Q: Recognising the difficulties of the international nature of cyber crime – until the conviction rate is increased there will be no notable difference as the offenders are playing a numbers game.**

A: The speed with which money is taken from victims and then sent to up to 30,000 accounts internationally is eye watering – can be done within 40 seconds. There is a lot of work ongoing around the world to tackle this – important to protect our residents and educate people to the dangers. The Senior Citizen Liaison Team will come out to do talks to older people to raise awareness of this issue and to advise on better precautions.