

## South Somerset Public Forum, Yeovil – 02/02/2017

### Q&A Notes

Q: Why is there little policing of fox hunting in the area?

A: Tackling rural crime is important to the Constabulary and they will prosecute where appropriate. The Constabulary do have reduced resources and are tackling hidden as well as visible crime.

Q: Are the Constabulary aware of the decline in the trust of the Constabulary from Animal Welfare supporters? They feel the police are turning a blind eye to illegal cage trapping. Why will the police not give out details of the badger cull zone boundaries when requested – was this the Gold Commander's decision in the South West?

A: UK Policing is by consent and the Constabulary do not take the trust of the public for granted – the public confidence rate in Avon and Somerset currently stands at 77%. The Constabulary are aware of the petition relating to the badger cull and do investigate incident reports. The Badger Cull Zone information belongs to Natural England and the Constabulary do not have the right to disclose this information and so any groups or individuals seeking this information must contact Natural England.

Q: Lots of rural villages are experiencing serious crimes in terms of theft of farming equipment and animals e.g. recent theft of cattle given a dose of toxic worming solution which is a public health concern if the meat was to be sold. There are means of tracking the animals but organised crime groups will be able to detect existing trackers. What is being done to develop tracking devices that cannot be detected?

A: The Constabulary are trying to locate illegal abattoirs. Officers recently visited Lancashire as they have a successful detection rate in relation to rural crime. The Constabulary are looking into Safe Houses for cattle recovered and are looking to work with companies regarding tracking devices but are unable to make recommendations to the public regarding what devices to use. Theft of livestock is affected by the seasons e.g. increase in theft of Turkey's during the winter. The Area Commander stressed how vital it is that the community come forward with any information they have.

Q: Praised the introduction of Body Worn Video Cameras. Are there issues with Detainee Transport when it comes to drink driving where gathering the evidence is time critical? Will there be local Intoxication Meters for evidence gathering?

A: A roadside test is carried out and then there is the need for an evidential machine to gather evidence for court. This has been considered and the Constabulary are looking at retaining the facility locally but the detail is not yet confirmed. The Chief Constable has recently spoken with the Policing Minister asking for a change in the Police and Crime Evidence Act to allow officers to interview suspects on Body Worn Video Cameras – the Policing Minister was supportive of this and there is draft legislation.

Q: Praised the OneTeam approach and would be keen for this to be rolled out across rural areas as a fantastic job has been done in towns of bringing agencies together. Thank you to the OneTeams who go above and beyond the call of duty in helping vulnerable people.

A: The PCC recently attended a Yeovil OneTeam meeting and it was brilliant. Breaking down silos and solving problems together. This approach is the heart and soul of making communities safer. It is planned that some OneTeams will be virtual. This relates to Priority 4 of the new Police and Crime Plan to work in partnership and inspiring each other.

Q: One of the organisers of Wincanton Carnival. The carnival is plagued by the street pedlars (sellers). They arrive in lorries in huge numbers and cause a safety hazard by getting in front of the carts etc. As they are classed as pedlars instead of street traders and are given a license by the police instead of the Local Authority why are the police not enforcing powers? Can the Chief Constable raise the issue of the law being updated regarding pedlars with the Home Secretary?

A: The Police can enforce. There is a fine of £200. The Constabulary have to consider a wide number of issues in their response to the policing of Wincanton Carnival. There may be some confusion over the powers the police have with regard to pedlars and the Area Commander will make sure that a dialogue is opened with licensing and the Local Authority regarding this issue. The Chief Constable declined to raise the issue of the law in relation to street pedlars with the Home Secretary – the issue will be dealt with locally.

Q: Is there an update on the closure of Yeovil Police Station and what will happen to the building once it has been closed?

A: Custody will close first with the date for the front office colocation with the Fire and Rescue Service yet to be agreed. An alternative response base is being sought and public announcements will be made as soon as possible after decisions have been made.

Q: Who polices parking on double yellow lines and parking against drop curbs? Concerns raised about certain areas of the community where parking causes obstructions and risks.

A: The police do have powers but this has to be balanced against other demands and as such attending all incidents of parking on double yellow lines is not practical. The Police have powers if an obstruction is being caused or there is a risk to public safety. Officers will discuss details directly after the meeting regarding the specific concerns raised.

Q: Granddaughter was stalked and this was reported on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2016 and the female responsible was just given a warning – why?

A: Officers will take details directly after the meeting.

Q: Residents of Wyndham Park are experiencing increasing levels of drug related crime. What action is being taken to ensure that residents can resume their normal lives and feel safe? Children cannot use the park due to needles and older people are scared to leave their homes.

A: Action took place last summer and the Neighbourhood Policing Team continues to check vulnerable addresses in that area. The public were assured that the Neighbourhood Policing number will not be reduced. The Constabulary encourage the community to come forward with information and they will continue to support vulnerable people.

Q: Victim of a Race Hate Crime attack on 24/12/16 in a shop. This was reported to the police who took a statement. The perpetrator was identified and an interview and investigation took place. The victim was informed that the CCTV was not directed to where the incident took place and so there was no evidence and she was told that it was not a racially motivated crime. The victim was referred to SARI with the case logged as harassment instead of Hate Crime.

A: The Chief Constable apologised to the victim and confirmed that if she perceived the incident to be a Hate Crime then it should have been recorded as such. Officers will speak to the victim directly after the meeting. The Area Commander is the Hate Crime Lead in Somerset and confirmed that there has been an increase in that type of crime and the Constabulary are working with the local authority to understand the scale of issues in Somerset and ensure that victims are signposted to support agencies. The Area Commander is going to be Chairing a new Governance Sub-Group under the Safer Stronger Partnership relating to this. Hate Crime Champions have been introduced. The PCC and Chief Constable thanked the victim for raising this issue.

Q: Members of the IAG (Independent Advisory Group). Regarding Hate Crime are victims blamed for lack of cooperation with the police? Are Avon and Somerset worst in the league table for Hate Crime? Attended a Hate Crime Champions Group meeting and there were two Police Officers in attendance who didn't know what IAG's were. Concern regarding victims of Hate Crime who are referred to SARI an organisation only available 9am to 5pm on weekdays which is inconvenient for a lot of people.

A: Tackling Hate Crime is a high priority. More victims are coming forward, in 2013/14 1406 incidents of Hate Crime were recorded in Avon and Somerset compared to a year to date figure of 2450 with 19% of those solved. The Constabulary take this issue seriously and will be doing more to tackle it. The Constabulary are grateful for the work of the IAG. The Area Commander explained the low rate of solved Hate Crime – the Constabulary are focused on:

- building confidence to report Hate Crime
- better identifying Hate Crime
- ensuring proper victim support
- doing what is in the best interests of the victim – acknowledging that they often would rather have the issue resolved than see the perpetrator prosecuted.

Q: The Somerset Black Development Agency was trying to increase police representation 10 years ago so why is it only at 2% now and what is the Force doing to increase this?

A: The Constabulary recognise the work to be done in increasing confidence and building positive relationships to persuade those from BME backgrounds that policing is a career choice. Policing has come a long way with the female representation in Avon and Somerset now at 43% percent with many senior leaders being female. The Chief Constable explained that the police are not allowed to positively discriminate but what they can do is take positive action up to the point of selection doing what the law allows such as mentoring.

Q: A lot of money was spent on Yeovil Police Station and now it has been announced that it will be closed. Can the new front office have private areas to report crimes of a sensitive nature? Example given of a sensitive case reported recently openly in the front office.

A: Apologies there are side rooms in the current front office that should have been used. This feedback will be taken on board as the Constabulary want the public to feel confident and comfortable to report crime.

Q: How many detainees can be dealt with by the Detainee Transport Service (DTS)? What is the procedure at night? What is the procedure for a violent prisoner – officer safety? Is the DTS at additional cost?

A: Three custody centres is the reality of what the Force can afford. Many now voluntarily attend a policing hub so DTS will not be required. DTS not finalised yet. The Constabulary are having to be forward thinking in managing demand and resources e.g. high risk missing persons case. To have repaired and maintained the current custody facilities at Yeovil Police Station would cost £8.5m which is not affordable so tough decisions had to be made and some of the savings from the closure of Yeovil Police Station will fund the DTS. To put into context the work of the Constabulary around 8,000 people go missing each year which is hugely resource intensive but the public will not be aware of this. The Constabulary confirmed that the DTS vans will be purpose built and safe and reduction in police custody units is reflective of what forces are doing nationally. The PCC will monitor the use of DTS closely to be assured of its effectiveness.

Q: Is DTS already used in Yeovil?

A: Yes it is running at times of peak demand (Friday and Saturday night) and is also being used effectively in other areas of the force.

Q: In the past the arresting officer would have to present evidence to custody – how will this be overcome?

A: This is not the case anyone can convey this information to custody, it does not have to be the arresting officer.

Q: The police force is diminishing in size and there are now fewer police officers in Yeovil. What is the policing resource in Yeovil and what is the Force doing to increase the funding? Concerns raised that the Police and Crime Plan cannot be achieved with the current number of officers.

A: The PCC regularly meets with MPs to lobby for a fairer funding formula. Avon and Somerset Police is the second worst affected force by damping which sees funding that the force is assessed to need being allocated to other forces – this additional funding would pay for around 350 extra Police Officers and PCSOs. No one is going to give the police any more money and it is clear that all public sector bodies are badly affected by funding cuts. Avon and Somerset Police are having to make further savings of £20m between now and 2020. Now policing in a different landscape and dealing with more complex demands. The public indicated that they wished to see local policing protected and the same level of visible local policing presence will be maintained. The Chief Constable wants to do more policing not less and this means that the organisation has to radically transform and be innovative so the frontline can be more visible and proactive. The Chief Constable confirmed that he cannot give details of the resource in Yeovil and the number of those on duty at any one time as this information would be useful to criminals. The Constabulary is dedicated to achieving the Police and Crime Plan.

Q: Yeovil Crime Reduction Team Representative. Spoke to local MP, Marcus Fysh, a year ago regarding the increasing population of the town and local surrounding area and assisting police in helping to reduce crime. Mr Fysh was going to respond but no reply has been received. The Police and Crime Plan is good. Concern raised that Police Officers don't get despondent.

A: The Chief Constable thanked the Yeovil Crime Reduction Team for the work they do. They do a fantastic job of supporting the Police in keeping the community safe.