**Notes from the PFCC Basildon Public Meeting**

**Held at Barleylands Farm Centre on Tuesday 25th February 2025 7pm to 8.15pm**

Present: PFCC Roger Hirst

Area Manager Mark Eaglestone ECFRS

Ch/Insp Dan McHugh – Essex Police

Ch/Supt Chris Bradford – Essex Police

Julie Long – Basildon Community Safety Partnership Manager

Lisa Hopcroft

Introduction from PFCC Roger Hirst

Achieved a lot since 2016, ASB, Homicide and Burglary is down. Need to do more around rape, sexual assault and vehicle crime. Fire and rescue have had a real focus over past few years on protection and prevention and house fires and deaths caused by fire are coming down. Need to do better at identifying vulnerable people as they are most at risk of dying in a fire.

Also need to do more around road safety as had got better over last 10 years but seeing a plateau and more people are killed or seriously injured on our roads than all other crime put together.

Had some pressures around funding as it has been capped by government so had to increase the precept this year by £14 for policing and £5 for fire and rescue.

Questions

**Q - what effect is Basildon custody and (potentially) the front counter being closed having on policing in Basildon, such as officers having to go Southend custody and the extra time that takes. Does it mean less officers available in Basildon? Is this driven by cost?**

Ch/Supt Bradford – have heard concerns about the whole of Basildon police station closing – can categorically state that Basildon police station is not closing. Currently our custody staff are spread too thin which means long delays in booking in detainees. Desire is to have police officers not in custody but out in the community instead.

Front office proposals – currently going through consultation so will update when finalised.

PFCC – custody issue not driven by budget by the police looking at making good use of custody cells and custody sergeants. Front counter is driven by cost.

**Q - Eastgate Centre is seeing a dramatic rise in ASB over the last few weeks – what is being done?**

Ch/Insp Dan McHugh – there had been a rise in ASB during half term. Officers have attended a number of incidents and it resulted in 2 arrests. ASB overall in the district reduced by 147 incidents in the last 12 months, but we cannot be complacent and must address ASB and the impact it has on our communities.

**Q – how are crime figures going down – how do you count those figures. ASB in Wickford is really bad and never see a police officer. And reporting through 101 is terrible and takes ages to get through.**

PFCC – 101 is better than where it was but still not anywhere where it needs to be. Over £1m invested in 2024 and the improvements made should take effect next month (March 2025). 101 takes way too long to answer. Currently waiting times are low teens but should be around 5 minutes.

Wickford has been suffering ASB incidents and we have been liaising with Basildon Borough Council and the newly formed Wickford Town Council, as experience shows us that by partnership working and putting officers and wardens out and about it can help tackle ASB. This has worked really well Witham and Wickford TC is linking in with them to see what works.

**Q – where are the police in Wickford? Never see any officers on the beat.**

Ch/Insp – officers are out and about in the community and regularly attend the market and in the town centre. Also have a new operation where officers will be out in resident’s streets, holding meetings etc.

**Q – attended one of the meetings before and nothing happened from it.**

Ch/Insp – will ensure there is a better way of recording issues and acting on them.

Julie Long – Basildon Council are working with colleagues at Eastgate to see what the issues are and how we can resolve them. Also community safety wardens will come to an end in March, but we are looking at alternative approaches such as a town warden in Wickford. Also looking at getting a community hub in Wickford in the former police station.

**Q – Resident from Laindon noted a lot of building work being done and hoping to have a drop-in centre there soon. Also doing a lot of work with Trussell Trust and wondered if there was a way to advertise in local high streets. Also with young people getting involved in ASB and crime would it be worth getting an army or forces recruitment office them to try and encourage them into joining navy or army.**

**Road Safety – London Road Brentwood very dangerous and three accidents there recently.**

PFCC taken a lot of feedback – thank you. Will look at how we can share information with local businesses.

**Q – What are police doing about the safety of young people in Laindon, Pitsea as they are being harassed in the town centre. Had young daughters who were sexually assaulted and no longer feel it is safe to let them go out. They are being harassed by men even when they go out to local McDonalds.**

Ch/Insp – not acceptable that young girls feel unsafe. Police are working with local services to engage young people about behaviours which takes place through interventions, sports clubs, schools etc. PCSOs allocated to Wickford, Pitsea and Basildon – eyes and ears in community. Need to be better about advertising what’s available to access. Also hearing time and again how officers need to be more visible.

**Q - do the fire service go and visit businesses in the area, as have been into some and it is a fire hazard. No way would get out if a fire broke out.**

Mark Eaglestone – ECFRS have teams that go out to visit businesses and home safety and we give advice. However, if someone refers a concern to the Service, they can go in. A problem with retailers is the short-term leases such as firework sellers who take a property on and then are gone by the time an officer attends.

Also have protection who are out and about all the time checking properties and businesses and have the power to - have 6 officers in Basildon who go out and serve prohibition orders.

**Q – Dep Leader felt the community wardens were not value for money and are looking at spending money more. And why is it over 80% of crime is not solved in Basildon?**

PFCC – depends on the crime. Homicide is 100% solved and so is more serious crime but more prolific crime such as ASB, cybercrime and vehicle crime can be more difficult to solve.

Vehicle crime – have met with vehicle manufacturers and have new unit in Essex Police. Have busted chop shops and working with manufacturers in making their vehicles safer.

Funding wise had acknowledged the support from Leader of Basildon Council in gaining more funding for policing.

Q – **Basildon Eastgate Centre – how are you going to encourage more people to report ASB.**

**Funding received in raising council tax – how are you spending that money effectively. Will you be rolling out live facial recognition (LFR)?**

Ch/Insp – difficult to get people to report ASB as we need to make the reporting process slicker and give more feedback and also raise awareness of the importance of reporting crime so resources can be allocated. Also need to publish work about what we do with ASB such as education, prevention and enforcement.

LFR has been fantastic and we use it in Basildon and regularly use it in the district.

Vehicle Crime – currently have an ongoing op and have stopped over 200 vehicles and made a number of arrests including busting chopshops.

PFCC – had to increase council tax to cover increase in national insurance increase and pensions. Had a big increase in police numbers and we want to keep all those officers. Rape and sexual assault is a vile and pernicious and we need to work hard to beat it. We will beat vehicle crime and shop lifting but rape and sexual assault will be more difficult.

**Q – will crime prevention leaflets be delivered all around the district and not just Basildon?**

JL – yes will absolutely share leaflets around all areas in Basildon

**Q – are CCTV cameras in Wickford working?**

JL – Yes they are and we have 98% of cameras working. Currently working on a bid with PFCC for funding for more cameras.

**Q – can police access the cameras?**

JL – yes police can access them on a mobile device and we have made a number of arrests. Need to get some comms out to reassure people that the cameras are working.

**Q – There are less police officers, police stations and no visibility. Fire and Rescue struggling with ECFRS recruitment in Billericay. It took 16 minutes to get to a house fire in Saffron Walden and a lady died. Will the PFCC and CFO be considering their position.**

ME – Billericay on call fire station offers 83% availability and have just reduced their turn out time. Billericay performing really well. We have over establishment on our whole time FF but we are looking for on call firefighters.

PFCC – currently an investigation into the death of a woman in the housefire.

**Q - Front desk closure at Basildon – will there be a public consultation with a wide outreach?**

Ch/Supt Bradford – no there won’t.

**Q – if someone is reporting a live crime and has dyslexia what happens?**

PFCC – if a crime is happening you must call 999.

**Q – What are numbers like for Specials recruitment?**

PFCC – we have depleted our Special from 550 to 300 as they joined the regulars and we are now down to 300. Actively recruiting and

DH – have 17 specials in Basildon but we always want more!