



PFCC Chelmsford Public Meeting

March 3rd 2025

7pm to 8pm

Held at Chelmsford City Council Chamber, Duke Street, Chelmsford

Panel Members

Roger Hirst - PFCC

Area Manager Kerry Taylor- ECFRS

Ch/Insp Paul Ballard – Essex Police

Spencer Clarke - Public Protection Manager Chelmsford City Council

Introduction – Roger Hirst

After years of investment in the Services, both police and the fire and rescue now facing a tough time economically. Government thrust is to focus on neighbourhood policing and reduce knife crime and VAWG. Current budget has resulted in some projects being halted but it was important to keep the number of officers on our streets following the increase of 905 officers and the success in getting all crime down. Budget has meant the police service will lose some police staff and police officers have had their allowance cut.

Successes in recent years with homicide and burglary halved and ASB down by 70%. However, shop lifting and car theft is up and we are working hard with businesses and partners to bring these crimes down.

With fire and rescue service the budget has meant stalling some planned projects but are committed to the prevention work activity, including safe home visits that has helped bring down number of fires in the home.

Questions from the audience

Q - What are police doing to tackle new types of online crime?

PFCC – online crime is a huge issue and is multifaceted ranging from cyber fraud to cyber bullying to online child abuse. The national lead for tackling cybercrime is the City of London Police and there is a regional lead for online abuse which is a collaboration of several forces. Essex Police have teams that pursue people online, but we rely in experts in City Police. The PFCC was also part of Eastern Region Cyber Resilience Centre. So important that victims report online fraud so we know what we are dealing with. It is an area that needs more investment.

Ch/Insp Ballard – localised picture in Chelmsford is that the team do a lot of work around educating and warning people. Local CPT and partners arrange events and information sessions both in the district and across Essex. Also have partner initiatives including one with local banks to safeguard customers who may be victims of fraud.

Q – There have been 20 murders in Chelmsford over the years. 18 took place in the outskirts, but most of police activity is focused in the city centre. Why is there so much focus on town centre and not the outskirts?

PFCC – Homicide is an awful crime but in Essex it is 100% are solved and it is coming down. In 2015 there were 30 homicides. In 2024 there were 15. Had success in knife related drug driven homicide, but aware Chelmsford is a place where homicide is too high.

Ch/Insp Ballard – completely understands concerns that police seem focus in city centre, the police teams do patrol outer areas and respond to the information they have in the most effective way. There are patrols in Baddow but acutely aware of the challenges that the community face there. However, city centre does have the highest volume of crime and have to respond to that. Important community keep police informed about what is going on so we can respond, use CPT, PCSOs EP website etc

Q – Special Supt Int in court charged with sexual assault that day - why wasn't he sacked at the time of the alleged crime back in 2019 and instead allowed to resign?

PFCC – only aware of this today and will be asking questions as it relates back to 2018/19. Since Sarah Everard have gone through all police vetting and police have been taken through misconduct.

Q – How can police be more visible in the district?

PFCC - have invested a lot in more neighbourhood policing including the creation of town centre teams, increased community policing teams and a focus on more prevention activity. Introduced more technology to identify and patterns of crime and putting in proactive hotspot policing. Hotspot policing really key in helping to reduce ASB. Will be doing more of that. Also funded safer streets projects that can provide initiatives to make unsafe areas safer.

SC – not just police we also have community safety officers, detached youth workers, hotspot funding (city centre Parkway/Melbourne).

Ch/Insp – hyper localised perspective Community Policing Team and Neighbourhood Policing Team there will be additional officers as part of government funding.

Q – Police doing well in some areas of crime but low-level crime is not being solved. What additional funding is required to get more low-level crimes solved and culprits caught/

PFCC – When looked at what we needed to get serious crime down back in 2018, worked out needed 900 more officers. Now have those extra officers and crime is coming down but it is slower than would like, so more officers would mean achieving goal more quickly - but we are on the right track.

Ch/Insp - vehicle crime, burglary, cycle theft is a real issue. Had spates of cycle theft that was far higher than other parts of the district and have worked hard over 2 years to get it down. All three crimes are coming down in past 12 months and culprits have been prosecuted. Understand these so called ‘low level’ crimes really impact residents lives.

Q – PFCC- £365m budget for Essex Police but 360 crimes in the district – what value are the public getting from their police service?

PFCC – attended police commendations on previous Friday – police officers commended for saving lives and putting their own lives at risk. Do that sort of stuff day in day out. Road traffic collisions cause most death and serious injury – horrific to deal with but officers turn up and deal with them. Live in a country that has low crime but we have freedom and we can police without firearms. What the public get is the freedom to go about their lives free of crime in a free society.

Q – Noticed less fire engines and full-time crews – How does the fire and rescue service feel they are covering the county?

KTaylor – feel in a very safe place regarding fire crew cover in the county. Chelmsford station is full time and has four watches with 52 firefighters. Baddow and South Woodham are on-call and this is a challenge. Currently working on response times and are always looking at recruiting on call firefighters – so anyone interested please contact the fire service.

Also work hard on prevention work to stop fires happening in the first place. Now have 20% fewer house fires than we did before Covid. Fewer people getting hurt is a good thing.

Q – Standard of drivers on the road is pretty appalling. See some really bad driving but police are never around to catch them doing it.

Ch/Insp – if in police car very rarely see people misbehaving, so implement other tactics such as cameras, HGV cameras, mobile cameras. Technology is improving all the time. Road traffic is a real issue and if people have intelligence where there are hotspots where bad driving is taking place then let police know. Do lots of education through driver awareness course.

Also can use extra eyes where dashcam records perpetrators that can be sent into police and action will be taken

Q – Fire hydrants: do ECFRS do the upkeep on them. Some are under loads of soil and hard to access. Is this an issue?

KTaylor – yes ECFRS do have a fire hydrant team. Naturally there are some hydrants that deteriorate but teams will get to it.

Q - With new estates being built will there be enough water to fight a fire.

KTaylor– have fire hydrants scattered along roads and also store it on the appliance. Also review planning applications to ensure water and fire hydrants are incorporated, so confident there would be sufficient water.

Q - Hotspot areas – what does Meadgate have to do to get hotspot funding?

Spencer Clarke – need all partners on board and not just police and city council. Data shows that Meadgate isn't an outlier but what we need to do is look at community concerns and perception of confidence. Will be increasing patrols and have met with partners to see what more we can do.

Meeting ended at 8pm