

**Harlow Public Meeting Notes**

**Date:** 6th May 2025
**Time:** 7:00 PM to 8:00 PM
**Location:** Passmores Academy Main Hall, Tracyes Rd, Harlow CM18 6JH

**Panel Members:**

* PFCC Roger Hirst (RH)
* Ch Insp Jenna Mirrington-French (JMF)
* ECFRS Group Manager Steve Wintrip (SW)
* Councillor Joel Charles, Portfolio Holder for Public Protection (JC)

**Update from PFCC Roger Hirst**

**Growth in Police Force:**

* Increased Essex Police by 905 officers since 2016.
* Neighbourhood Policing Teams boosted by 74 extra officers, focusing on visible policing, crime prevention, and intervention.
* Ambition to reduce crime by 40% from its peak.
* All crime down 14% since its peak.

**Crime Reduction: Harlow Specific**

* Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) down 17%.
* Burglary down 37.9%.
* No homicides in the last 12 months.
* Overall crime down 12.3%.

**Current Overview**

* Public money is tight, similar to other public sectors.
* Shortfall in police funding this year will result in some staff job losses and collaboration plans being put on hold.

**Future Plans**

* Committed to delivering the best possible services to the public and working with government and partners throughout Essex to reform and improve policing.
* Ambition to reduce crime to historic lows.
* Need to focus more on road safety, as more people are killed and seriously injured on Essex roads than by all other crimes combined.
* Safe and secure communities are essential for economic growth.

**Questions from the Audience**

**Q: HMICFRS report criticised police section 40 PACE Custody and its application to vulnerable adults and children. Have new sergeants been brought in as report recommended?**

**RH:** Yes, we have reviewed the number of police sergeants in custody and filled these positions with specific custody sergeants. We have rationalised the estate and now have five custody suites around the county. Police are working better, and we commission ICVs to go into custody suites, continuing to scrutinise going forward.

**Q: Are there fewer officers than claimed? Need more officers on the streets. Drug dealing is ongoing.**

**RH:** In the last two years, we hired 2000 extra officers to accommodate for leavers. Now, 40% have under five years of experience. We are 905 officers stronger than in 2018. Foot patrol is not the most effective way of preventing crime. Criminals are in cars and on bikes. We rely on the public to report crime so we can deploy proactive patrols in key areas.

**JMF:** Every ward has a lead officer who will speak to residents and do walk-arounds. We will ensure a presence is felt.

**JC:** The council has a community safety team with members from all agencies to tackle issues in hotspots. We will factor in visits to the area. I have gone out with officers on late shifts, and morale has been positive.

**Q: Is there a limit for shoplifting before it is dealt with?**

**RH:** There is no limit in Essex. We focus on the individual perpetrating the crimes, not the amount. We have had meetings with big supermarkets to improve collaboration. There has been a surge in shoplifting since COVID, with organized crime involved. We have taken over 1200 shoplifters through the courts in the past year.

**JMF:** We have a new process to fast-track shoplifters to courts if there is evidence. We are also getting CBOs against prolific offenders and addressing underlying issues like drug or alcohol misuse to break the cycle of crime.

**Q: What is the police’s view on e-scooters?**

**RH:** E-scooters are not compatible with current traffic rules. They are too fast for pavements and not safe enough for roads. Government studies are ongoing. Proportionally, there are more injuries on e-scooters.

**JMF:** We are not tolerant of e-scooters and seized two this weekend.

**Q: Was the police consulted on the council's decision to join the government e-scooter trial?**

**JC:** The council discussed and decided to explore the e-scooter trial. All blue light services will be consulted.

**Q: Town centre policing – no police presence lately.**

**RH:** We have increased police presence on the streets since the meeting four years ago. ASB is going down in the district as a consequence.

**JC:** We have implemented a hotspot policing model with funding from the PFCC. Areas like The Gates have seen success. Regeneration and more proactive measures are key to reducing ASB and crime.

JMF – we are looking at

**Q: Speeding in Old Harlow – can police conduct a speed check?**

**RH:** Community Speedwatch is effective in slowing people down. Average speed cameras are also a good option.

**JC:** Gilden Way is an issue, and work has been done to reduce casualties. Community Speedwatch is a great initiative.

**JMF:** NPT will conduct speed checks in the area. I support Community Speedwatch and would join them if they regroup.

**SW:** ECFRS is focusing on road safety education in schools to positively influence young people's mindsets. Crews will promote this message.

**Q: ASB on buses – buses stop running in the evening and Sundays. What can police do?**

**JC:** Disappointed to hear about the reduction in bus services. We need to address local vandalism to restore services.

**Q: Knife crime – what is being done?**

**RH:** Knife crime is a concern. We started a public health approach in 2018 with the Violence and Vulnerability Unit. We use enforcement, education, and intervention programs to reduce knife crime. Knife crime is 18% lower, and drug-driven homicides are down 70%. We are seven years into a ten-year program.

**JC:** We work with educational establishments to prevent young people from getting involved in knife crime.

**JMF:** Most knife crime victims are aged 10-19. We focus on this age group with children and young persons officers.

**Q: What is the law about cars with devices that make loud noises?**

**RH:** There is a noise pollution limit. Report it so we can get an idea of times/days/locations.

**Q: Who is responsible for people having a mental health crisis?**

**RH:** The NHS is responsible, and if someone collapses behind closed doors, it is the fire and rescue service.

**Q:** With the proliferation of high-rise buildings in Harlow will Aerial Ladder Platform return?

**SW:** We are currently reviewing where specialist equipment is needed.

**Q: what is in place to deal with battery vehicle fires in basements?**

SW: Crews receive a lot of training but lithium-ion battery fires are challenge to attend. Crews are trained to deal with cars with lithium-ion batteries in enclosed spaces. If in the open, we let the battery burn. Decision we make to open compartment means we change the parameters, need to plan carefully and weigh up the situations carefully and mitigate it to a point.

**Q: What about using saline?**

SW – we are looking into that, but we always plan for the worse and carefully weigh up what we do. Is a developing area and we need to look at the technology and evidence.