**Colchester Public Meeting November 11th 2024**

**St Michael’s Hall, West Mersea**

Panel:

Jane Gardner, Deputy Police Fire and Crime Commissioner (JG)

Ch/Insp Colin Cox, District Commander Colchester, Essex Police (CC)

Insp Chris Coyles, Colchester Local Policing Team, Essex Police (CCo)

Quentin Sage, Station Manager, Essex County Fire and Rescue Service (QS)

Cllr Natalie Sommers, St Anne’s and St John’s ward, Colchester City Council (NS)

Andrew Tyrrell, Head of Public Protection, Colchester City Council (AT)

JG: Panel introduction. Update on PCP and F&RP priorities 2024-2028, crime stats for area, funding initiatives and achievements.

CC: Update on crime stats, crime prevention initiatives, ASB social media, and reporting crimes

QS: West Mersea station update and appliance availability stats. Resourcing and recruitment/training update, River Strood water rescue capability training. District update on RTC stats, road safety training and engagement etc. Safety inspection update on high rise properties, business venues etc. Home safety visits, community smoke alarm installation update. Fire Stoppers, online/phone anonymous reporting facility to report suspicious fire activity.

**Q&A**

Audience member (1) raised ongoing concerns over police misconduct, stalking and harassment and failure of EP and PFCC to address concerns over past 3 years of communication. Challenge JG to make changes and resolve ongoing issues with Colchester police officers within twelve months.

JG: apology, to discuss with audience member after meeting.

Audience member (2) raised ongoing concerns over robberies, burglaries and ASB on Bear Estate in Colchester with no police action or response.

JG: apology, to discuss with audience member after meeting.

Audience member (3) thanks officers for their work and efforts. Thank City Wardens for taking pressure off local police and mentioned recent incident where they resolved ASB in the city centre. Thank you to ECFRS. Concerns with Extra Eyes not declining to take phone camera footage of drivers on mobile phones at lights and being accused of “seeking out offenders which is not conducive by having your phone on”.

CC: Concerned with negative response from Extra Eyes, the service has always been promoted within the force. Roads Policing are also relaunching Extra Eyes. Ch/Insp Colin Cox to follow up with Head of Roads Policing and respond directly to the gentleman.

Audience member (4) Cllr Martin Walsh raising concerns of the alleged attempted burglaries at Courses Estate. Lack of police interest in cctv / front doorbell video footage. Residents want assurance. Despite contacting Ch/Insp Cox have had no response. Reply from a female officer who requested evidence which Cllr Walsh directed her to the facebook page for local residents to view posts from containing evidence/footage. Wants to know why officers don’t view local facebook pages/social media as a matter of course. Cllr Walsh has received no further updates from any officer.

JG: Facebook and social media is not monitored in this way.

CC: Apology – will discuss with Cllr Walsh after meeting. There are other ways to report crimes, not on social media. Advised Cllr Walsh and audience to email the community policing inbox which is monitored by officers.

Audience member (1) comments that the problem falls to Colchester police and probation service lack of communication to apprehend repeat offenders and those on license who are responsible for the crimes in the local estate.

CC: It is a holistic / whole force approach. Explanation of probation services further powers. Advice for residents to take their own security measures to assist with preventing car theft, reassurance of patrols – plain clothes and uniformed.

JG: Suggests working with Andrew Tyrell, Head of Public Protection with the availability to bid for funding through safer streets and we should look at what we can do.

Audience member (5) concerns over lack of support/investigation into stalking cases, failures of Essex Police. Officers are covering up for their colleagues in Colchester. Chief Constable never responded to an 80page letter from the victim regarding the failures of Essex Police. When chased up 3 weeks later, an officer in the CC’s office stated it had already been passed to PSD however the date of email was suspicious and adds to failures and possibility that EP are covering up such scandals.

Request that an independent police force deal with this as IOPC is also being blocked by officers. PSD failures. PFCC not following statutory guidance on complaint handling.

JG: To discuss with audience member after meeting.

Audience member (6) Rick Williams. Local CSW coordinator. Speeding and reporting crime are big problems. Our monthly newsletter advises that we report ASB/harassment during CSW activities. We reported a case and received a “nfa” from police.

JG: requested to see a copy of the letter to follow up.

Audience (7) reported an incident with a neighbour where he was threatened with a shotgun. Heard nothing back for days, with a response saying officers had called him but he had not answered, I called back and was told they were too busy to call me. This was in May 2024; I have not heard anything further.

CC: Apology requested the information on the email and will follow up.

Audience member (7) Called 999 at 3.00am to report a light aircraft flying suspiciously low over his property on Mersea in June 2024. Was told “we don’t deal with those sorts of incidents; you need to call the CAA” I phoned the CAA and had a recorded message “not open to take calls till 8.30” I called CAA back in the morning who told me the police should have dealt with it. They also told me about Op Pegasus that deals with those sorts of things. I was passed from pillar to post, and I couldn’t be bothered to take it any further.

Audience member (8) local Cllr and CSW member. We have had problems getting the police to come to Mersea with a speed gun. Request for assistance and police action for speeding.

CC: We can deal with the issue of speeding locally. Provides information on TrueCam and offers to arrange them to have a TrueCam site on Mersea. Ch/Insp Cox to speak to PCSOs and arrange. Offers to work together to get site authorised.

Audience member (8) adds that the local SC has to go all the way to the Colchester station to do admin and it would be much better for the community if he could have a base in the local fire station on Mersea.

JG: This issue has previously been raised with the Chief Constable. Will ensure this item is on the agenda at the next 1:1 meeting of CC/PFCC

CC: Explains challenges regarding security considerations of parva spray storage, data protection of radio and documents which need restricted access. However, if this is supported by PFCC we can try further to make it happen.

Audience member (9) Serious concerns regarding police handling of complaints. IOPC breaches of response times. According to data, Essex Police receives more complaints than any other force. Statutory Guidance is regularly with expected response times. What actions are being taken by PFCC to address these issues?

JG: Thank you. Explanation of PSD governance and IOPC national governance. We challenge these delays at national level and through ongoing scrutiny of PSD.

Audience member (10) lots of elderly residents wanting to report low level crime but don’t know how to report / too long on phone / too lengthy and cumbersome. Can we please have an app or a way to encourage and assist elderly residents in reporting?

Audience member - there is a Neighbourhood Watch on the island who would be happy to help the elderly. The NW co-ordinator can then refer it to the police. SC in audience also says that he can help and can speak to elderly if that is helpful. There is more to be done education wise.

Audience member (11) Local Cllr for Castle Ward. One of the main concerns of residents is about hotels being used for emergency accommodation along station road. Cedrick House has people from London, Bedford etc. Once they prove they have a connection to Colchester they are offered this accommodation. Area has become a hotspot for drugs/asb. Request for installation of cameras and visible policing. Very concerning that Hate crime is not mentioned once in the Police and Crime Plan 2024-2028 despite Essex Police saying that hate crime, islamophobia has increased 100% in Colchester.

AT: We are looking at CCTV for that area and The Leader of the Council has agreed to meet with all ward councillors to discuss. CSP Manager at Colchester City Council leads on the hate crime theme by Essex Police. We believe that hate crime has reduced, and we would like to hear from ethnic minorities, disabled groups, etc, regarding access issues. I would be happy to take contacts and conduct some of the sessions

Audience member (11) Daniel Rees, Serious Crime me and Court Reporter at Evening Gazette offers to report on above issues or other concerns if people would like to contact him. He will be following up on victims of sexual abuse treatment by Essex Police and local burglaries/asb cases that are not being investigated.

JG: Thanks and close