

**Appendix to the minutes of the 17 December 2020 Scrutiny and Overview
Committee meeting. Question and answer session with the Chief Constable,
Cambridgeshire Constabulary.**

Question 1: How are we to meet the challenges of the rapidly growing new town at Northstowe, already experiencing issues with ASB, with reductions in our local officers?

Answer: The Chief Constable informed the committee that the county was covered by response officers supported by neighbourhood policing teams. Northstowe was supported by two sergeants who led two neighbourhood teams. The constabulary was responding to issues that occurred with the rapid development across the county. The Chief Constable provided assurance around neighbourhood policing and reassured members that detailed analysis had been carried out regarding the allocation of PCSOs in the neighbourhood structure; he explained the criteria for how this was done. The committee was informed that every neighbourhood would get a PCSO. The constabulary was aware of local issues at Northstowe which had been flagged to the neighbourhood policing teams and discussed with the relevant problem-solving group. The committee was informed that neighbourhood support teams and other police assets were available to carry out more targeted work.

Question 2: What impact will the reduction in funding have for the community safety partnership in communities like Longstanton/Northstowe which have been identified as priority?

Answer: The Chief Constable clarified that as part of the cuts announced, the decision had been made to remove the role of the community safety officer. He explained the difference between the community safety partnership and community safety officers. He provided assurance that work was ongoing on how to reallocate the work of the community safety officers to avoid any loss in service. The loss of 60 staff across the organisation would have some impact however as much as possible was being done to mitigate the impact of this on communities and reassign the work of these officers. The Chief Constable explained that funding for the community safety partnership came from the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Question 3: The press release said they would guarantee a 'PCSO in every neighbourhood'- what do they consider a neighbourhood- what size patch are they going to have to cover?

Answer: The Chief Constable explained how PCSOs were assigned. He explained that this depended on the location and demand of the neighbourhood. Resource was matched against size of neighbourhood, threat, risk and vulnerability of the location. He explained that although there were dedicated officers and PCSOs for a geographic area, the resource was flexed to situations as needed.

Question 4: How frequently should any of our villages expect to see a Police Officer or PCSO on its streets in an average month?

Answer: This was a difficult question to answer as this depended on demand. The committee was informed that through the analytical expertise at police headquarters and monitoring of demand, policing presence was flexed in response to demand. The Chief Constable emphasised the importance of people reporting issues to them.

Question 5: We have many residents and Parish Councils who are unhappy with these changes, who should then contact, to most effectively try to get these changes reversed?

Answer: The Chief Constable informed committee members that the decisions regarding these changes had already been signed off and would be implemented. This had been done following consultation. The Chief Constable informed the committee that these had not been easy decisions to make, however the financial situation had to be addressed by the Chief Constable

Question 6: What difference, if any, would it make to police resourcing if responsibility for parking enforcement in all or part of South Cambridgeshire were to be handled by civil enforcement, as it is already in Cambridge City and on those parts of the Park & Ride sites which fall within South Cambs. See <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2004/2424/made>. There are parts of Orchard Park, Trumpington and no doubt other areas which currently fall outside civil enforcement because they are outside the City boundary, and therefore the police are in theory responsible for parking enforcement. Because people know that the police do not have the resources to do this effectively, it is reported that some people are parking illegally in those parts of Orchard Park and Trumpington which fall within South Cambs. Similarly there are villages in South Cambs, including Great Shelford and Sawston, and no doubt others, where lack of resources for police enforcement eg. parking on double yellow lines, is a cause of some concern. This may become a bigger problem as new developments like Waterbeach, Northstowe and extensions to Cambourne are developed.

Answer: The committee was informed by the Chief Constable that civil enforcement of parking was a big topic of debate. Parking was a significant concern for members of the public however was not a high priority for the Police. The Chief Constable informed committee members that parking and speeding was constantly raised with the Police by the community and were issues that affected the quality of life of residents. The Chief Constable informed the committee that he would welcome discussion regarding civil enforcement of parking transferring to district councils.

Question 7: What measures have been taken to combat the increase in speeding in the District during and following lockdown?’

Answer: The Chief Constable informed the committee that speeding was an issue that was consistently raised at community meetings. There was a specialist constabulary for speed enforcement in South Cambridgeshire. Road policing units and speed camera vans were used. Speedwatch across the county was also a valuable resource and there was an extensive network of Speedwatch volunteers. There had been a reduction in the number of volunteers due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but it was hoped this would improve in 2021.

Question 8: How effective is the RCAT (Rural Crime Action Team) team in working with local officers to combat rural crime? Could he provide some instances for our District?

Answer: The Chief Constable informed the committee that RCAT did a fantastic job and was an extremely effective team. Extra resource had been put into RCAT which now had a PCSO; this post would remain despite the recently announced changes. There was an increasing RCAT presence across rural communities. The Chief Constable provided some examples of successful operations with RCAT involvement which had resulted in the recovery of stolen goods and the discovery of several cannabis factories.

Question 9: What effect will the proposed reduction in PCSO numbers have on the overall strength of officers (PCSO and regular officers) available for community policing in South Cambs? Would the rise of regular officer numbers over recent years leave us with a net gain in officer numbers, a fall or will it be neutral against officer numbers in 2010?

Answer: The Chief Constable explained how the allocation of PCSOs and police officers was calculated. He informed the committee that since early 2017, the number of neighbourhood officers had increased from 57 to 132 (to the end of March 2020). PCSO numbers would be reduced by 40. Whilst some of these reductions would be in South Cambridgeshire, these would be minimal. The Chief Constable informed the committee that there would be an overall net gain and Cambridgeshire had the highest number of warranted officers that it had had since 2010. Officers were being deployed as they were being recruited through the government uplift programme. The year 1 allocation for the uplift programme had already been recruited. The year 2 allocation was an additional 58 officers on top of normal recruitment. The committee was informed that it would take time to recruit these officers.

Some committee members raised concern that local knowledge may be lost with the loss of PCSOs who had been serving some areas for a long time and who knew the community well. The Constable informed the committee that the local knowledge of these PCSOs was recognised. Through the uplift programme and recruitment, there was an option for PCSOs to train as police officers. The Chief Constable was committed to deploying any PCSOs who trained as police officers, back into their communities. This would enable continuity of their local knowledge and relationships within the communities.

The Chief Constable informed the committee of the following:

- Since 2010, 20,000 officers had been lost within policing. Any increase in warranted police officers was welcomed and the allocation from the government uplift programme was welcomed. A large proportion of response officers were young in service and inexperienced; this was not unique to Cambridgeshire. To support inexperienced officers, the committee was informed that these officers were put into a continuous professional development unit with experienced officers. These units had been in place since mid-September 2020 and the benefits of the support this provided to inexperienced frontline officers had been seen.
- The Chief Constable clarified that no police stations were being closed. Sawston and Cambourne would be police stations with neighbourhood teams.
- Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, communication with the constabulary had moved online rather than people physically attending police stations. The committee was informed that footfall within community police stations was minimal.

The Chief Constable responded to concerns raised by some committee members regarding the relocation of the police station from central Cambridge to a site near the Milton park and ride. Members informed the Chief Constable that some Milton residents were concerned about the potential impact of people being released from custody, on the community in Milton and queried what action was being taken to ensure the residents of Milton were not negatively impacted by this. Members queried whether CCTV could be installed between Milton and the footbridge. In response to the concerns raised:

- The Chief Constable informed committee members that the CCTV issue had been raised with him and he would investigate this.
- The Chief Constable explained that police stations were already located within communities and activities such as drug dealing and anti-social behaviour were not seen in the vicinity of police stations. Criminal activity was not seen around the police station at its current city centre location and it was not expected to be seen in Milton.
- The Chief Constable explained that Milton would see a larger police presence, which residents would hopefully find reassuring.
- The Chief Constable explained that risk assessments were carried out for all people admitted to and released from police custody; this was a legal requirement. Any vulnerable individuals were released into the company of an adult, guardian, or responsible person.