

POLICE Question Time

with  Cheshire
Police Authority

CONGLETON, 12 JULY 2010

THE PANEL

- *Margaret Ollerenshaw, Chairman of the Police Authority*
- *Dave Whatton, Chief Constable*
- *Chief Superintendent Mick Garrihy, Area Commander for Eastern Cheshire*
- *Tony Potts, Community Safety Partnership*
- *Sandra Link, Assistant Chief Executive, Cheshire Probation*

YOUTH CRIME

Q "What efforts are you putting in place to tackle youth crime? There is not much in Congleton for youths to do"

A Tony Potts gave some examples of the Community Safety Partnership providing activities for young people in Congleton such as a boxing club and a programme for young motorcyclists. All schemes are supervised and transport is provided. Sandra Link explained that Cheshire Probation work closely with the Youth Offending Service to try to engage young people in positive activities to reduce re-offending, especially if they are going through the court process.

Q What role do parents play in tackling ASB and youth crime?

A Sandra Link said that the Youth Justice Team work with parents through parental orders to teach a variety of skills. Cheshire Probation aim to do similar but they run their programme with a variety of accredited community volunteers.

POLICE VISIBILITY

Q Would it be cost effective to use motorcycles like the Velocette which was used in Yorkshire years ago - silent and used to "beat" large areas. Better than the mountain bike?

A Ch.Supt Garrihy explained that motorcycles are used for enforcement and education on Cheshire's roads. They are effective but can be an expensive as they often need back up such as prisoner transport. There are also unmarked and off-road motorbikes in use. Motorcycles can cover as much as 20,000 miles per year and do have other specific costs associated with more frequent servicing and maintenance. Overall they can very effective if used in the right environment and have significantly helped the Constabulary address road policing issues.

Margaret Ollerenshaw added that the role of the Authority is to assess the use of resources to ensure that the right people and equipment are doing the right job.

Q Is single and double crewing and the environmental impact of using cars considered?

- A The Chief Constable explained that there is currently a large review being undertaken of everything the police do and the associated costs. He would prefer to see officers walking or on bikes in the community engaging with people, but different parts of the area require different policing styles. It may be more appropriate for officers to use public transport for example. Whatever the case, officers need to be able to respond quickly.

NOISE

- Q When does noise nuisance become anti-social behaviour and why is it such a grey area?
- A Tony Potts said that noise needs to be tackled in partnership as it can be a confusing issue. Annoyance or nuisance noise in a home or private property should be tackled by Environmental Health as they have the powers to deal with it and not the police. If the incident is a one off, a letter of advice will be sent. If the noise repeats, monitoring devices can be set up and prosecutions through the Magistrates court may result. If the noise is in the street the police have the powers to deal with it. However, if the noise becomes anti-social it becomes confusing and the police work in partnership with the Council.
- Chief Superintendent Garrihy added, the problem is if noise becomes aggravated and affects ones quality of life or is threatening, the police can deal with it and will work with the council to find the most appropriate way.

ROAD POLICING

- Q Why do the police seem to be turning a blind eye to the use of mobile phones whilst driving?" On a similar issue, a question was raised about speeding motorists on the Macclesfield to Congleton Road.
- A Ch.Supt Garrihy answered that 589 fixed penalty notices have been issued in East Cheshire since March for mobile phone use, 129 were in Congleton. The offence incurs a £60 fine or 3 points. Education sometimes works better than enforcement and the police work with the council and fire service to educate people about the risks. For example, young people have been asking "what would you do if you killed me?" to offenders. There are means to check whether the phone was in use when caught.

There are 30 officers in the Road Policing Unit in Cheshire East who catch speeding criminals. There are also Community Speedwatch schemes which are invaluable. Again, education works just as well as enforcement.

Margaret Ollerenshaw added that Magistrates take these offences very seriously and now that use of mobile phones is endorsable, after 12 points, offenders can be banned from driving.

The Chief Constable added, that this is taken very seriously as it saves lives.

COMMUNICATION WITH HOMEWATCH

- Q Could the police reinstate the e.mail Homewatch newsletter. It kept people informed and provided a platform for the Neighbourhood Watches?

- A 3 staff are employed in East Cheshire to co-ordinate Homewatch and there are over 1000 schemes in operation. Ch.Supt Garrihy said that the schemes are critical to the police spreading and giving information.

PARKING

- Q When will something be done to prevent parents of children at Mossley School from using Roseville Drive as a free car park?
- A Unfortunately for residents, this is a public road. We have regularly sent a PCSO up there to prevent obstructions. The school are fully aware but there is nothing they can do. We have asked them in the past and quite recently (about 2 months ago) to put something out to parents. The only way it could be prevented is if double yellow lines were put in by Cheshire East Council but the locals may not like that as they won't be able to park there either.
- Q A local residents group has asked: Should Cheshire East Council have taken on responsibility for on street parking in Park Rd when their own amenities (Park paddling pool / Pavillion Restaurant / Fellowship House) are displacing residential parking? The Council has suggested permits which they will not enforce at most needed times e.g. weekends, school holidays & evenings.
- A Tony Potts had spoken to the car park manager who said that where there are existing enforceable restrictions, they will be enforced without discretion. A parking review is being undertaken for the whole of Congleton and will look at this area. A residents scheme may be a solution. A £50 per annum fee covers the administration costs and the scheme does not earn profit or revenue. It would not be done without the prior approval of the residents and is only an option.

ILLEGAL TRADE

- Q What can be done about illegal trading on lay-bys eg second hand cars
- A This is a Trading Standards issue

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

- Q If we are seriously worried about the road safety aspects of a planning application how can we get comments from Cheshire Police?
- A The reviewing of speed restrictions is dealt with by the Council.

PRISON COSTS

- Q The Coalition Government wants to reduce sentencing to reduce prison costs. They also want to reduce police funding. How will the reduced police cope with the increase of offenders in the community?
- A Sandra Link explained that we don't yet know exactly what the Government is proposing. They are looking at how to deal with people with sentences up to 6 months and are suggesting more community disposals / restrictions with supervision rather than custodial sentences. It is known that if offenders are well managed in the community, re-offending can reduce by 34% so it can be more cost effective. The Chief Constable said that the police face massive financial challenges and is concerned about the levels of savings needed but that he would ensure that policing in the community is maintained as are mechanisms to prevent re-offending. Cheshire Probation and police officers work well together to prevent re-offending. Restorative

Justice is also having a positive effect.

COMMUNITY PAYBACK

- Q Courts are being asked to impose community sentences. Are there enough projects for people to do?
- A There are at the moment but if anyone has a community project that could be done contact the Macclesfield or Crewe Probation office. Projects can also be nominated via the Cheshire Probation website. All workers are fully assessed and supervised and well matched to appropriate projects.

FINANCE

- Q The proposed budget cuts will need a major review – are you working on a strategy and are you employing consultants?
- A The Chief Constable explained that the force is going thru a financial planning process to reduce costs. They are looking at £32m cuts over the next 4 years but will not know what is required until the Government publishes the Comprehensive Spending review in Autumn. Up to 84% of funds are spent on people so removing a large chunk of the budget gives significant challenges.
- Q Will you be spending money on Constables or PCSOs?
- A The right balance will have to be struck to ensure that we are having the right impact in the community. PCSOs do not get abstracted to deal with investigative case files following an arrest and so can spend more time in the community.

CLOUD 9

- Q What preparations are in place for the planned festival in Arclid?
- A The police have been negotiating with the council and a road plan is being looked at, as is on-site security. At midnight the noise will stop as everyone will be given headphones.