

POLICE Question Time

with  Cheshire
Police Authority

ELLESMERE PORT, 15 JULY 2010

THE PANEL

- *Moira Chapman, Member of the Police Authority*
- *Ian Wiggett, Assistant Chief Constable*
- *Phil Jones, Superintendent for the Western Area*
- *Gavin Butler, Community Safety Partnership*
- *Marie Orrell, Assistant Chief Executive, Cheshire Probation*

POLICE QUESTION TIME MEETINGS

Q 3 questions were asked about whether the Authority would be holding 'Police Question Time' meetings in Neston.

A Mrs Ollerenshaw advised that the Authority and the Constabulary undertook many forms of engagement and that 'Police Question Time' meetings were held in areas of highest population. The more recently introduced Roadshows assisted the Authority in consulting with the public on policing issues and would be held throughout the area, including Neston, later in the year.

Superintendent Jones added that the local Inspector and his team held surgeries with details available on the Constabulary's website.

POLICE VISIBILITY

Q Is there going to be a special force, either police or community officers travelling the beat and walking around the area of Ellesmere Port?
Where have all the beat PCs gone? We never see one, only in cars... and we are supposed to have more police now than ever before. Where are they? Not on the beat as they should be but in cars. Another resident had asked a similar question and would like to see more patrols around pubs.

A Superintendent Jones reported that the Neighbourhood Policing Team which comprised of an Inspector, 5 Sergeants and 25 Constables with additional support from 13 PCSOs were dedicated to the area and responsible for community policing and local engagement. A number of Police specialist units had been relocated to Ellesmere Port Police Station resulting in a greater presence and visibility in the town, however, not all police activity was visible.

Q A question was raised about out of hours patrols in Neston.

The dedicated resources for Neston provide a 24 hour response and regularly work until 3am on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. Additional resources, such as Traffic Unit could also be called upon when necessary.

Q Were the public reassured by the sight of a police officer or PCSO on patrol?

A Mrs Ollerenshaw advised that over 85% of officers were involved in frontline policing which included traffic, firearms and CID and that very few were now performing back office duties.

Marie Orrell from the Probation Service reported on the Community Payback Scheme which entailed offenders who had been sentenced by the Court to undertake unpaid work for the benefit of the local charities, churches and community, such as litter picking, painting a community building, etc. Over 40,000 hours of unpaid work which was managed by PCSOs and community wardens had been undertaken in 2009/10 by offenders.

Gavin Butler reported on the role performed by the four community wardens which operated in Ellesmere Port specifically targeting environmental issues, offering reassurance and problem solving.

Positive comments were received from a representative from Saughall Parish Council about the work undertaken by their part funded PCSO.

Q Concern that local officers were not attending Parish Council meetings.

A The Assistant Chief Constable reported that it was not possible for officers to attend every meeting that they were invited to, however, efforts would be made to attend when available.

Q Concern was raised about the lack of a police presence in Ince village and a request for officers to patrol in neighbouring Elton village.

A The Superintendent reported that very few problems occurred in Ince and that resources were deployed to areas when demand was high. He agreed to task local Inspector for local officers and possibly motorway patrol officers to travel through the area.

WILDLIFE CRIME

Q Why is crime against wildlife, such as enforcing the hunting act given so little attention and why is it proposed to abolish the post of wildlife and environment officer?

A The Assistant Chief Constable reported that there would now be a police officer in each area who would have responsibility for wildlife issues.

The Constabulary did take the appropriate enforcement action when required, however, they had to prioritise the limited resources to target crimes which were of most concern to the public. The Constabulary had to be seen as fair and impartial.

POLICE HELICOPTER

Q An update on the operation of the new helicopter was requested

A Assistant Chief Constable Wiggett advised that good use was being made of the helicopter which had more benefits over the former fixed wing aircraft such as being used at night. There were reciprocal arrangements to provide cover with North Wales

when it was not operational or being serviced and other forces helicopters could be called upon if required.

PCSO POWERS

Q Are PCSOs allowed to use traffic speed guns?

A Superintendent Jones advised that some PCSOs were trained as they assisted in the management of the 'Community Speedwatch' initiative, however they did not have the powers to issue fixed penalty tickets for speeding.

POLICE FUNDING

Q Were the current number of police officers sufficient to police a population of over 1m?

A The Assistant Chief Constable advised that there was sufficient officers and that the Force had significantly more officers than 10 years ago with the additional support of 240 PCSOs and civilian staff undertaking many posts formally performed by police officers. Superintendent Jones advised that the target for emergency response within 15 minutes was regularly exceeded with an average response time of between 9-10 minutes.