

**Police & Community Safety Public Meeting
1st November 7pm Jury Room, Guildhall**

Present:

Cllr Veronica Liote, Mayor of Sandwich (in the chair)
Cllr MJ Holloway, Town & District Councillor
Inspector Stuart Norris, Kent Police
Heidi Kenmure, Community Safety & CCTV Manager, DDC
Cllr Ms S Chandler, District & County Councillor
Cllr D Friend, Sandwich Town Council
Cllr P Graeme, Sandwich Town Council
Cllr J Sneller, Sandwich Town Council
Cllr J Franklin, Sandwich Town Council
Cllr D Wood, Sandwich Town Council
Cllr Ms L O'Donoghue, Sandwich Town Council
43 Members of the public

Welcome from the Mayor

The Mayor welcomed those present and set out the order and duration of the meeting.

Introductions

Cllr MJ Holloway, Town & District Councillor with the DDC Portfolio for Community Safety provided context about how this meeting had come about – the Police & Crime Commissioner had originally been invited to visit Sandwich, however, he had declined and it was recommended that an officer with operational knowledge would be best suited to answer questions. Chief Inspector Mark Weller had then arranged for Inspector Norris to attend.

Cllr Holloway explained that in his role at DDC he does not have responsibility for the Police; but he does work closely with them.

Inspector Stuart Norris, Community Safety Unit Inspector for the Dover District, Kent Police introduced himself and confirmed that he has operational responsibility (within reason) for Sandwich and is the correct person to answer resident's questions.

Heidi Kenmure, Community Safety and CCTV Manager at Dover District Council introduced herself and explained about her role, particularly in relation to problems with anti-social behaviour.

Questions received in advance

1) The belief is in Sandwich, and I understand many parts of the country, that visible police presence reduces crime, deters local and petty criminals along with giving confidence to residents by improving communication and re-instating the respect once held for the police. Given the diverse and expanding work load and responsibilities of our police service

e.g. terrorism, cybercrime, violent street crime. drug rings etc. Can you explain why successive senior police officers bow to the will of government cuts and don't fight for the required budget that meets the needs of a police force that has the ability to cover such criminal activity?

Inspector Norris: Funding is set by central government and Ins. Norris cannot speak on behalf of senior officers.

2) Can Inspector Norris tell us when we will get a fully warranted Police Officer as we had been promised?

Inspector Norris: I am not aware of any promises that have been made. There are no plans for Sandwich to have a dedicated police constable.

3) How often do the current PCSOs patrol the town on foot, especially at night time as I have never seen either one?

Inspector Norris: There are two full time PCSOs dedicated to Sandwich, Ash & Eastry. Per shift they spend 2-4 hours in Sandwich.

4) How come any requests for use of the CCTV images relating to crimes in Sandwich never result in arrests or prosecutions being made?

Ms Kenmure: CCTV is only a piece of the puzzle, if this enquiry relates to a specific case please provide Ms Kenmure with specific information. The same CCTV system is available across the district and this year there have been 98 convictions in Dover involving CCTV, 18 in Deal, and 1 in Sandwich.

Inspector Norris: In the last three months there have been 2 thefts reported in Sandwich, 4 fights and 8 burglaries (two of which when considered weren't burglaries at all); town centre crimes are very rare and improvements in CCTV are unlikely to have an overall impact on the levels of, presently low recorded crimes.

5) When is the DDC CCTV system being upgraded as we were promised last year?

Cllr Holloway: The CCTV provisions across the Dover District will be upgraded in April 2019. There's been a delay because the process has been more complicated than expected, largely because so much has changed since the system was last reviewed in the 1990s. There will be a consultation on the location of the cameras. An interesting aside to this project is that free wifi for the town will be included in this project.

6) Why are reported crimes where a crime number is gained never followed up, no visit by officers is made and no end result is given?

Inspector Norris: Please can the person who posted this question contact Inspector Norris to provide specific details and this will be investigated. Sometimes mistakes are made, sometimes it's obvious from the initial contact that the case will not progress and is unsolvable. Someone reporting a crime is informed at the time if the case will not be progressed, however, 'soft language' is used and Inspector Norris suggested that sometimes the message might not be clear.

7) Why are the PCSO surgeries continued on the same basis, namely no information or advice is given by the PCSO as it is confidential, or they are not allowed to comment, when the result is a wasted visit by members of the public.

Inspector Norris: Officers must be very careful when it comes to personal data, around which there are very strict rules. Inspector Norris has spoken with PCSO Skirrow who is unaware of any incidents when she or her colleagues have refused to answer a question or provide information.

8) Where a police vehicle has attended a crime in Sandwich what is the attendance time as the quickest has been reported as being 40 minutes, is this acceptable?

Inspector Norris: The average response time for an emergency is 10-15 minutes, two recent emergencies were responded to in 9 minutes and 6 minutes. Due to the location of Sandwich officers will respond from Dover, Thanet and Canterbury – whoever is nearest will respond.

9) There appears to be a total absence of any parking restriction enforcement in Sandwich, particularly outside the timed and pay for parking areas. Double yellow lining is routinely ignored in residential areas surrounding the town centre (within the town walls). If Dover District Council cannot – or will not – provide regular parking enforcement, then can responsibility be jointly shared with the police?

Ms Kenmure: 794 penalty notices have been issued for the Sandwich area this year, including evening patrol.

Inspector Norris: The Police do not enforce parking matters, except for obstructions.

10) Do you consider it an efficient & effective way of spending tax payers money by employing 2 PCSOs who:

a) are hardly ever here;

b) who through no fault of theirs cannot carry out duties which residents want and expect of a police force they pay for?

Inspector Norris: Sandwich is lucky to have two PCSOs, he is under pressure to reduce this provision and move these officers to higher crime areas, but he keeps these officers here due to the concerns of the community. Inspector Norris is aware that there is a problem with nuisance bikes and speed, but crime and criminality in Sandwich are very low. It's not about comparison – Sandwich is one of the safest places in the country. Also, there are not 'just' two PCSOs – there is an entire force with specialist officers ready to respond to emergencies in Sandwich.

11) Why are we paying £40k per year for 2 PCSOs who cannot do what we expect from the police force when we can have a qualified police officer for roughly £25k who is able to carry out these duties? Norfolk Police was given as an example of a force that decided to stop using PCSOs.

Inspector Norris: There are no plans to replace the PCSOs with PCs. However, Inspector Norris will report back to his superiors that this is a popular proposal.

12) Are you aware that residents say you can by and large do what you like here as no one does anything about it?

Inspector Norris: This is not correct. The community do not sit around doing nothing, crimes are reported and the police respond.

13) Sir Robert Peel's number one principle for law enforcement stated, "the basic mission for which the police exists is to prevent crime and disorder". With violent crime in Kent having risen to 38% with 22,000 violent offences reported last year who is patrolling our streets after 11pm when the PCSO's, who have no powers of arrest anyway, go off duty at 11pm, where is the prevention?

Inspector Norris: Kent now includes crimes that haven't previously been included in the crime statistics and the Inspector of Constabulary now rates Kent as "excellent" for doing this. There are more crimes included in Kent's statistics than other counties.

Additional questions received on the night

1) Has there been a rise in violent crimes?

Inspector Norris: There has only been one violent public crime in the last year, Inspector Norris is not aware of any street fighting. Most violent crime occurs in people's homes.

2) Would re-opening local magistrates courts improve conviction rates?

Inspector Norris: There are currently no plans to do this. Personally, inspector Norris believes that taking young people and first-time offenders down a criminal justice route can do more harm than good. Whereas a less judicial route for young people and first-time offenders can be more useful; if the victim is satisfied with this proposal.

Cllr Sue Chandler: The number of first-time offenders has decreased this year.

3) Cllr Holloway reported that the Police & Crime Commissioner increased the precept by the maximum this year and recruitment of an extra 200 police constables is in progress. With plans for an additional 200 officers in 2019/20. It is not known how many officers will be allocated to the Dover District. The local community can put pressure on Kent Police to get these resources to Dover. A local resident asked how many (of the 20,000 officers lost across the country since 2010) have been from the Dover District. Inspector Norris responded that he does not know.

4) A local resident reported that although she had felt concerned about crime in Sandwich when arriving at the meeting, she has been very assured by the statistics and information provided by Inspector Norris – she feels that there's a lot of over reaction from other residents in the meeting.

5) The issue of speeding vehicles, particularly motorbikes, was raised. Inspector Norris reported that he is currently considering whether a Public Spaces Protection Order could be used to improve the problem in the town. Cllr Sue Chandler reported that she's asked the Kent Police Speed Watch Co-ordinator to reconsider a scheme for Sandwich – previously it had been thought that due to various restrictions such a scheme was not possible in Sandwich. Inspector Norris reported that a Special Constable has undertaken speed checks recently and the local primary school children have spoken with speeding motorists – Cllr Holloway noted that the police should do more to promote these activities.

6) Dangerous parking was discussed. Ms Kenmure reported that DDC needs to be informed of where and when problems occur.

7) A general increase in vandalism and graffiti was noted. Ms Kenmure reported that these problems can be reported to Dover Community Safety Unit or 101 / 999. It was confirmed that anything reported to the CSU, if it's a crime will be passed to the police and added to the crime statistics. Contact details for the CSU are at the end of these notes.

8) Inspector Norris was asked if people reporting crimes are protected from repercussions. Inspector Norris reported that confidential information is an unbreakable rule and the police will do everything in their power to protect those who report crimes.

9) It was confirmed that there's a monthly public drop-in meeting with the PCSO's held at the Guildhall. These events will be publicised on social media, in the East Kent Mercury, the library and the noticeboards at the Guildhall and No Name Street.

Closing Observations:

1) Reporting is key - Inspector Norris stressed that local residents MUST report problems, the police can only act upon what they know about. It will also help the police build a picture of where and when resources are required.

2) The Community Safety Unit will put out communication on how they can be contacted.

3) The Police should do more to promote the activities and initiatives that they're taking.

4) The notes from this meeting will be shared with the public.

Subsequent Meetings

It was agreed by the residents present that they would like for this meeting to be regular event and it was agreed that another meeting would be arrange for three months' time.

The Mayor thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting was closed at 20:30.

Dover Community Safety Unit

Anti-social behaviour: If you would like to report anti-social behaviour call the ASB hotline on 01304 872220 or email csu@dover.gov.uk
In an emergency dial 999 or non-emergency dial 101

Waste Litter/Flytipping: To report waste/litter/flytipping please call Dover District Council on 01304 872428

<https://www.dover.gov.uk/Community/Community-Safety/Home.aspx>