

**Notes of the Public Meeting with Prevention Inspector Allan Lowe
held on 11 January 2018 at 7pm at Lancing Parish Halls**

Present: 25 members of the public

Press: 1

Parish Councillors: Gloria Eveleigh, Mick Clark, Lee Cowen, Robin Monk, Lionel Parsons, Geoff Patmore, Gina Scotting

Youth Councillors: 4

Prevention Inspector Allan Lowe provided a short background to his career. He has been an operational officer in the Worthing and Adur area for 27 years and endeavours to carry out foot patrols whenever he can and enjoys the interaction with the community.

He went on to provide an introduction to modern policing, acknowledging technology has created new forms of crime and that the budgetary cuts have resulted in a reduction of staff. The most recent restructure took place in November 2017, with the outcome creating three units – Emergency Response, Investigations and the unit he oversees, the Prevention Team. The Prevention team work involves problem solving, gathering community intelligence, working with the community and patrolling areas where the community has highlighted specific issues. To help with the gathering of community intelligence, he has introduced Street Briefings – informal meetings held in various locations around the area for the public to chat to PCSO's, who will endeavour to find out what local issues are.

Insp Lowe then answered questions from the public.

Q – (Parish Cllr) What's your view on Neighbourhood Watch and the volunteering aspects?

A – Insp Lowe and the Police overall fully support the initiative and they are really important for gathering community intelligence.

Q – (Parish Cllr) Do the Police still help with the set up of neighbourhood watch schemes?

A – Whilst the Police work in partnership with Neighbourhood Watch, it is a stand-a-lone organisation, run as a separate entity.

Q – (Parish Cllr) Sympathy is extended in respect of the budgetary cuts the Police are experiencing. It is felt that not enough partnership working is made between the Police and Ward Councillors to share community information and the Police should monitor Facebook more for further intelligence.

A – It is acknowledged that changes with technology haven't fully come to terms with yet, and Cllrs are encouraged to email any details considered pertinent. There are two members of staff whose role is to deal with media matters and check through Facebook, but it is not possible to fully police the internet.

Cllr Patmore advised that it is appreciated when the Police do put comments on Facebook and Insp Lowe said he would pass the thanks on to the two members of staff involved.

Q – (Young person) Is Lancing Police Station still in use full time?

A – It is used for administration purposes as it unfortunately doesn't have a front desk available to the public. However, there is a 'yellow phone box' on the exterior of the building for the public to report non-emergency incidents.

Q – (Youth Cllr) At the Village Forum in autumn 2017, the Youth Council was asked what we were doing to help deal with anti-social behavior issues within Lancing. How can we help the Police with such issues?

A – Anti-social behavior has decreased in the area and it is recognised that it may only be a few individuals who are responsible for causing the community issues. The Police possibly don't interact with young people as best as it could and would like to improve on this to establish what issues are out there and to harness the information young people can provide. If the Police are unable to deal with an issue, they will work with partners who can.

Q – (Youth Cllr) There needs to be a more positive spin around young people. When the older generation see groups of young people, they assume they're up to no good.

A – It is accepted that it is only a small minority that are up to no good and it is work in progress to improve the image of young people. Whilst the Police visit schools for educational purposes, this work needs to go further and the use of the Police's Youth Ambassador's taken advantage more.

Cllr Eveleigh suggested the Police worked with Lancing Parish Youth Council in this respect and Insp Lowe confirmed that he would look at doing something later in the Spring.

Q – (Parish Cllr) Are there any knife/gun crime concerns for the area and are gangs becoming a problem?

A – It is not a known local problem, albeit one incident is one too many. There are no reports from schools and there is an intention to carry out some promotional work in schools around the issue. However, it is acknowledged that there is a fine line by highlighting the issue, it might make people think that there's more of a problem than there is.

There are no known gangs in the area, but Insp Lowe advised that the area's big issue is drugs coming in from London, gang members being used as the traffickers and some violent incidents have subsequently occurred. An associated crime known as cuckooing takes place. This is when a drug dealer befriends a vulnerable individual who lives on their own. The drug dealer then moves in, takes over the property, and turns it into a drug den. The Police are working on this issue.

Q – (Youth Cllr) Based on recent events in the news regarding Police with-holding evidence, do you have any doubts in the relationship between Sussex Police and the Crown Prosecution Service – bearing in mind that it affects the integrity of the entirety of the Sussex Police.

A – It's the job of the Police to gather data for cases and they are obliged to provide this information, so such cases are disappointing and are a cause for concern.

Q – (Owner of The Perch) My business has been suffering the significant problem of anti-social behaviour for the last six months. It is affecting trade and have had to reduce opening hours in the evening as staff are not prepared to work late shifts because of this issue.

A – All incidents should be reported to the Police, this will identify the area as a 'hot spot' for ASB and patrols of the location with will be stepped up. All Officers wear body cameras, which can be quickly activated to capture necessary evidence.

Insp Lowe stated that he had initially been made aware of the issues of anti-social behaviour at Beach Green from Cllr Eveleigh reporting the matter at the local Joint Area Group.

He described the 'Broken Window Effect', i.e. a theory stating that by maintaining and monitoring urban environments will prevent small crimes such as anti-social behaviour, and help to create an atmosphere of order and lawfulness, thereby preventing more serious crimes from happening.

Q - (Owner of The Perch) I appreciate that the ASB is not necessarily associated to those who use the skatepark, but it's how the two groups can be separated, could CCTV be installed?

A – Unfortunately, the Police don't provide CCTV and know that systems are costly to install. However, the Police will work with the business to put plans in place in anticipation of the warmer/lighter nights when ASB may increase.

Q – (Young person) How often do you need to use your weapons and in what situations?

A – Rarely. Police are given extensive training to assess every situation to gauge which item of equipment to use. Pepper spray is the first to be used, this causes the eyes to become inflamed, so the offender cannot see and is then easily restrained, but it doesn't have any lasting effects. Secondly, the taser is used. This is an electroshock gun and delivers an electric current to disrupt voluntary control of muscles causing the offender to again, being easily restrained. It also doesn't have any lasting effects. The baton is used as a last resort as it is a heavy weapon and can cause injuries.

Q – (Parish Cllr) When working with the community, is it not possible to wear plain clothes as a uniform is sometimes seen as a barrier?

A – Most public events require a uniform to be worn, but some situations allow for plain clothes to be worn.

Q – (Parish Cllr) When investigating incidents, are plain clothes worn then?

A – Plain clothes are generally used during specific operations, but it can depend on the incident.

Q – (Public) Is it possible to have a suggestions/information box put in the Police station?

A – It is preferred for the public to report any information via Crimestoppers, or through the usual Police contact details.

Q – (Parish Cllr) – When intelligence has been gathered on a purported offender, do you then have to obtain evidence to charge that individual?

A – Not necessarily, it is helpful to have some facts prior to the individual being spoken to.

Q – (Parish Cllr) What happens if a purported offender is a young person in care?

A – The young person's case worker would be contacted.

Q – (Youth Cllr) In your opinion, has mental health had a significant contribution towards crime in the local area, and if so, how have the Police helped people with these particular issues?

A – The Police are usually the last of the Services to be involved, unless the situation is deemed to be a threat/risk/harm to other individuals. These people aren't necessarily criminals and in most cases, involve people that are more 'disturbed' and many of their acts are not always their own fault.

However, the Police can use 'Section 136' of the Mental Health Act. This gives the police the power to remove a person from a public place when they appear to be suffering from a mental disorder, to a place of safety. There is a new initiative of Police working with Mental Health nurses on some shifts to jointly attend mental health related incidents and it's working really well.

Q – (Youth Cllr) Were you involved with the incidents of anti-social behaviour at Monks Recreation ground last year?

A – Yes, and it's really important to let the Police know of any further incidents.

Q – (Parish Cllr) The emphasis from this evening's meeting is that everyone in the community should report any incident, no matter insignificant it might be, 'knowledge is power'!

A – Yes, the control office can match up reports of similar incidents in the same location and Police patrols can be stepped up for that area.

Q – (Parish Cllr) Can the Police put any pressure on the Crown Prosecution Service to progress the Shoreham air crash investigation?

A – The Police were involved in the incident, but are unfortunately not able to intervene at this stage.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm.