



**Essex Rural Partnership (ERP) Full Membership Minutes  
Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2015**

Detailed notes of presentation by Nick Alston

**Rural Policing – Nick Alston Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)**

Nick explained the role of the PCC is to engage with communities and to hold the Chief Constable to account, thereby getting the best Police service possible.

Meetings were held with Parishes Councils and other forums to discuss what is happening with local policing to inform the PCC's work.

The Government need to deal with various challenges including better technology required by the Police as their current systems are out of date and a focus on reducing officer numbers, with a target of 5% reduction year on year resulting in 100-120 less Police Officers per year for the next five years.

Many crime statistics have fallen over the last few years, levelling out over the past two years, including those for:

- Domestic burglary
- Vehicle crime
- Theft
- Robbery

Incidences of violence and sexual offences have risen, with most cases reported in a domestic environment. 43% of serious sexual offences occur within a rural location.

Nick mentioned some local crime trends for last year:

- Arson damage - 70 offences
- Drug related crime - ↓13 %
- Sexual offences - ↑43 %
- Fraud – a growing crime

Nick acknowledged a need for police to differentiate between offences in rural areas vs urban and their relative importance, e.g. the impact of 'low level crime' such as shed burglaries can have a heightened impact in rural areas where this is more likely to impact on people livelihoods and should therefore be treated more urgently than in an urban area.

To have a local Police Officer within each community enables them to build a rapport, trust and help rural communities. Police Officers can meet with representatives for that community and discuss any concerns and actions required.

Essex Police is one of the most efficient forces in the country. It has the second lowest council tax rate in the country but in order to continue the good work this will need to rise by approximately 10% - this is still lower than the national average.

The Chief Constable does want to support local policing:

There are currently 300 PCSO locally; if 100 officers are cut per year this will affect the PSCO's, whom need to be kept as the local face and service for rural communities.

20% of people are not happy with the response they receive to 999 calls. The non-emergency service line 101 is also an available service for the public, however a high number of people are not satisfied with this service and it requires improvement.

Other forms of contact are being investigated:

- Emails – considered not to be secure regarding sensitive information
- Police 'hot' desk within official (e.g. local authority) buildings – this is to be explored
- More Special Constables? These are a great resource and communities support this
- Volunteering has real scope with the right training and interest
- Part funding for PCSO have gone but some parishes are still funding their PCSO

In response to fewer police officers and contact buildings, local engagement and partnerships must be strengthened, including with local authorities and mental health social care.

20% police time is spent with mental health issues, e.g. missing persons; online child abuse and domestic abuse/violence also take up substantial amounts of officer time.

Essex Police are focussing strongly on improving response times to 999 calls.

The Press displayed a renewed confidence as brothel /trafficking gangs were raided by the Police successfully earlier this year in Maldon, Clacton and Tendring.

There is need for better volunteer co-ordination. Special Constables are a great resource and communities support this; a new recruitment drive is planned.

It is recommended that we share the responsibility for travellers, and everyone does their bit. All leaders of councils have been written too in relation to the fact this it is not sole responsibility of the Police. Additional sites are required for the travellers, including a transient site, which (it is suggested) could be in Brentwood or Colchester.

Nick said he would keep Essex Police committed to Watch Schemes. He encouraged people to sign up to the Essex Community Messaging Service ([link to sign up here](#)). He informed that there are 12 rural specials and that a second team will provide further coverage.

### **Questions and Answers with Nick Alston (NA)**

**Dominic Petre** - As crime figures show the higher profile crimes are receiving more attention from the Police, with regard to the lower type of crime such as a typical shed break in do we still report and what is the process regarding insurance?

NA - Yes do report low level crime and any crime. 101 provides you with a crime number for insurance purposes and it also records the crime so we know what is going on in the community. i.e.

by recording trends such as burglary's the police can focus on this too, as ongoing problems and can be addressed.

**George Courtauld** – Essex Marine Police rumours that it may be abolished or merged with local police what's the status.

NA - Regional collaboration will be the way to go similar to the Police Helicopter, it is no longer viable for the Marine Unit to operate at county level.

**Sheila Jackson** – Why are success stories not published for us to see?

NA - Essex Police Press Office are in operation and working hard to show the Police figures and success stories.

**Peter Davey** - It is frustrating if one cannot afford to fund the PCSO and if possible would the PCSO attend something more higher ranking outside the community if he were called upon?

NA - Joint funding never worked, some Parishes do fund the training just for them no one else. If the council tax were raised by a few pence per household then it would help the funding and then yes there is call for a PCSO's for individual communities.