

## SURREY POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

### POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR SURREY

#### PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT/ 'IN THE KNOW'

13<sup>th</sup> July 2017

#### Engagement

##### Surrey Police Engagement

With the change in local policing under Policing in Your Neighbourhood (PiYN), there have been community and partner views that communication and engagement with Surrey's communities needs to be improved.

Part of the PCC's role is to scrutinise the level of public engagement carried out by the Force. Following public feedback via contact into the PCC's office and comments made in responses to the consultation on this year's council tax precept, the Force has been made aware that there are some concerns raised by the public over visibility of officers.

Surrey Police has recognised that there is gap in provision at the moment and the Force's public engagement strategy has been revised and is currently being further reviewed by Surrey Police under Assistant Chief Constable Nev Kemp.

This has also prompted a separate project being led by Chief Inspector Andy Rundle to look at what the Force can do to increase visibility and public confidence.

These two pieces of work are looking at reviewing presence at high footfall events as engagement opportunities, increasing and improving online/social media engagement by policing teams (including those such as APT who currently have little presence) and training and sharing good practice across the Force.

The revised engagement strategy reinforces that community engagement is everyone's responsibility and based on the fundamental principle that officers and staff are 'active in public' and this has an impact on the public they come into contact with.

The policy states: *“Every interaction with the public is community engagement and presents the opportunity for police to share information about policing in their area, provide reassurance and gather information and intelligence to inform policing priorities.*

*“Community engagement can be formal and structured but officers and staff shouldn’t underestimate the power of everyday, incidental informal interactions with the public that can have a profound impact on an individual’s confidence and perception of the police. For example simply acknowledging someone in a professional way, on the street, as you walk past in uniform could be that person’s only involvement with Surrey Police. We must ensure that every interaction is positive.”*

In terms of on-line engagement, each Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) has a Facebook and Twitter account for providing information, seeking feedback from the community and intelligence gathering. Those SNTs will target social media engagement to keep communities informed whilst Facebook Neighbourhood Panels will be used to engage with sections of the community who have found it difficult to attend such events in person.

Emphasis is placed on contributing to local online conversations rather than expecting communities to come to the police and then engaging with any responses from the public.

The engagement strategy also details how daily patrolling by PCSOs and APT/SNT officers will be tasked according to intelligence however their default will be to their allocated ward to maximise engagement opportunities to share appropriate information, gather intelligence and provide a visible reassurance to their local community.

Attendance at community meetings (residents associations, neighbourhood watch associations, parish meetings) and visits to schools, youth groups and places of worship etc will not routinely be undertaken by officers unless there is a specific policing purpose or issue to address.

Among other events, the PCC has recently attended the Surrey County Show and the Epsom Derby and witnessed first-hand the positive engagement officers and staff had with members of the public.

### **PCC Engagement**

The PCC’s office has a separate engagement strategy for the work of the Commissioner and his wider office.

The strategy sets out the PCC’s 10 engagement objectives, the key audiences and methods, key issues to engage with the public on, consultation and the OPCC’S social media approach. Communication and engagement have a central

role to play in ensuring the PCC can act as the voice of the public in policing matters by informing people about policies and activities which have an impact on them and involve them in the decision-making process. It can also assist in fulfilling the Commissioner's commitment to be open, transparent and accountable and to help residents, key organisations and other stakeholders understand the role of the PCC and how they can help shape policing and have a greater say in how their communities are policed.

At the end of the financial year, the PCC had been to 226 meetings, events or visits with organisations, charities and individuals since coming into post in addition to visiting as many of the policing teams in Surrey as possible. These have included neighbourhood watch meetings, parish and district councils, residents associations, businesses, schools, MPs, faith leaders and minority group representatives.

### **In the Know**

The 'In The Know' community messaging system was originally launched in April 2016 as a joint Surrey and Sussex Police initiative to replace the previous Active Citizen Service (ACS).

It uses the Neighbourhood Alert system (<https://www.neighbourhoodalert.co.uk/>) which is an online, secure community messaging system that allows authorised administrators to log in and send messages to registered people in the community, members of Neighbourhood Watch and other schemes (Resident Associations, Church Groups, Community contacts etc) who have chosen to receive them.

The system can send messages by email, telephone or text message by a range of approved Information Providers such as the Police, Neighbourhood Watch administrators, Trading Standards, the Fire Service and local councils.

Versions of the Neighbourhood Alert system are used in different counties across the UK including Thames Valley, Hampshire, Cheshire, Lancashire and Cumbria.

The purpose of using the version in Surrey and Sussex called 'In The Know' was to standardise community engagement and messaging across the two counties.

At present it is primarily used by Surrey Police to pass on witness appeals, crime updates, crime prevention advice and news through the local Safer Neighbourhood Teams administrators but there are plans to get local authorities and Surrey Fire and Rescue Service on board.

The number of current contacts/users now on the In The Know system (as of May 31), is just over 7,500 across the county. The Force's aspiration is to reach 10,000 by the end of the year.

Since its creation - 541 different messages were sent over the last year which has generated 223,236 emails sent to Surrey residents.

The 'In The Know' system has the potential to be a really useful tool for public engagement but has taken time to bed in and to grow of the number of users. Going forward:

- The approach to how 'In The Know' is used by the local SNTs needs to be more consistent across the county to avoid it becoming a 'post code lottery' as to the level of service and regularity in which messages are received.
- Now that all SNTs have been fully trained and the system should be working more efficiently and consistently – a further push around publicising the system should be considered. The PCC Communications function have offered support to the Force in assisting this through social media and adverts etc.
- Partner agencies need to work with the police in helping promote the service and encourage residents through their various networks to sign up.

More detailed background to the 'In The Know' system and analysis of its performance is available in Appendix A

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

For the panel and partners to help promote and direct residents to 'In The Know'.

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