

SURREY POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

PCC PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

5 February 2021

INTRODUCTION

The attached report details how the PCC has sought to engage with the Surrey public through face-to-face meetings and events, communications and consultation during the last year.

DETAILED REPORT

Meetings/Events

A key part of the PCC's day-to-day role is to get out and about in Surrey's communities to hear from those who work and live in the county and to listen to their opinions on policing. Over the last 12 months this has proved particularly difficult in light of the Covid-19 restrictions with many meetings and events having to be postponed, cancelled or where possible moved online.

However during 2020, the PCC attended over 100 different meetings, events or visits with local charities, residents groups, service providers and crime prevention organisations whether online or in person.

These have included meeting residents and residents groups from across the county including Reigate and Banstead, Weybridge, Woking, West Vale and Stanwell to discuss and help address local issues such as anti-social behaviour, bike theft, security concerns and rural crime.

Virtual meetings have included a Safer Streets webinar with Stanwell residents in September to discuss the plans for the project, a Facebook live meeting with Merstham residents in June and a joint meeting with Surrey Police and taxi drivers in Woking about Covid concerns.

In January and February last year, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Surrey Police teamed up to hold a second series of public engagement events in all 11 boroughs and districts across the county.

The 'Policing Your Community' events provided an opportunity for residents to hear from the PCC as well as Chief Constable Gavin Stephens and their local Borough Commander on policing priorities and community issues in their area and put any questions to them.

Nearly 500 residents attended the events across the county with positive feedback received from the majority of those who attended.

This year a similar series of events are currently taking place during January and February – but this time being held virtually due to the Covid-19 restrictions. The PCC's office and the Force have worked with an external production company to bring the events live to people's homes with presentations from the PCC, Chief Constable and the local Borough Commander recorded and played to the audience. That is followed by a live interactive question and answer session for residents to raise any issues or leave any comments.

It is the first time that the PCC's office or the Force have held such a series of events online and they are being recorded so that any residents who weren't able to attend can watch the proceedings retrospectively.

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Social media/digital communications

The official Surrey OPCC Twitter account has reached over 6,000 followers, with the combined following on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and Nextdoor growing by an average of 58 new followers a month. Posts across these channels were clicked, liked, commented on or watched an average of 1,079 times per week during 2020.

In September, the PCC's office set up an account with new social media channel Nextdoor, allowing more direct communication to residents living in Surrey. The initial post on this account reached 116,000 people and received 97 comments. Since October, 13 posts have been shared to Nextdoor, representing approximately 5% of the total messages shared on the PCC's channels. These accounted for 16% of the total engagement over the same period.

Efforts have also been made to establish access to residents' groups on Facebook that are estimated to include more than 300,000 people. The PCC's office is currently approved to post to 50 out of 62 groups identified and approached across all 11 boroughs. The average membership of these groups is close to 20,000 residents, so has the potential to greatly increase the reach of local messaging.

Communication via these groups is more limited than regular posts, however the engagement with a small number of recent posts about the PCC's council tax consultation and the Policing Your Community events in 2021 have shown it to be effective, with over 200 further shares and comments received in one week.

It is worth noting that the combined use of Facebook groups and Nextdoor has coincided with a significant increase in the number of new followers over this time, compared to the previous six months.

Since October, posts via Nextdoor and Facebook groups have extended the average reach of the PCC's online channels by approximately 26,000 people (average reach 47,000 to 73,000). In addition, the PCC has continued to use his own personal Twitter and Facebook account on which he posts regular video updates and engages in conversations about various policing topics.

A range of videos have been hosted on the OPCC's social media channels during the year on topics such as anti-social driving, parking, unauthorised encampments, plans for the new HQ in Leatherhead, speeding and the use of the Community Trigger.

Regular press statements, updates and announcements on a number of issues and topics are issued by the PCC's office which have appeared in various local, and on occasion national, online and print media including Surrey Live, the print edition of the Surrey Advertiser, the Farnham and Haslemere Herald, the Daily Telegraph and The Times.

The PCC is regularly interviewed by regional and national television and radio media including recent appearances to talk about various policing topics and issues such as unauthorised encampments, road safety, delays in the criminal justice system and Covid-19. In 2020, the PCC was featured in the local press and radio 152 times. This included slots on BBC Surrey, Times Radio, Heart Radio and Radio Jackie. The PCC also has a monthly column in the Surrey Chamber of Commerce magazine to update the business community on policing issues relevant to them.

Engagement during the pandemic

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the PCC and his office have played an active part in the multi-agency effort across the county to warn and inform residents across Surrey.

The PCC is a member of the Surrey Local Outbreak Engagement Board (LOEB) which is made up of Surrey leaders who meets regularly to oversee the county's response to the coronavirus outbreak.

The PCC's office have also had representation on the multi-agency communications group of the Local Resilience Forum which has met weekly to plan direct communication to residents on all aspects related to the county's response to the pandemic. That communication has formed a key part of the OPCC communication and engagement strategy during 2020.

The OPCC social media accounts have been regularly updated with the latest advice for residents and has shared important content from government and our partner agencies. A dedicated Covid-19 page was set up on the OPCC website which is updated with the latest advice and signposts people to some of the vital services available for vulnerable people.

Since the end of March last year, the PCC'S office has issued 22 media releases related to Covid-19 which has covered topics including police enforcement,

overcrowding at beauty spots, the rule of six and the reopening of the hospitality trade last summer.

In addition, the Commissioner's views and updates have featured regularly in the local media, including regular interviews on BBC Surrey to discuss the police response.

The PCC has also publically supported calls for the self-employed to be included in the furlough scheme and more recently for first responders to be prioritised in the vaccination programme.

In the early stages of the pandemic, the PCC created a Coronavirus Fund making £500,000 available from the office's operational reserve, mainly to assist organisations providing support for those affected by issues such as domestic abuse, homelessness and substance misuse. The PCC has issued regular updates to the public as the fund has been distributed over time. Recently, the PCC has agreed to fund the use of vans displaying digital screens for a weekend during the current lockdown. The vans are being arranged by the LRF to be used at beauty spots and crowded places across the county to remind people of the Covid restrictions.

Consultation

The PCC's office carries out a public consultation every year on the proposed council tax precept to gather the Surrey public's opinions on what the level should be and wider views of policing in the county.

A survey is circulated as widely as possible via the PCC's and Surrey Police social media channels, local media and the Surrey Police community messaging service 'In the Know', which now has over 12,000 people registered.

The 2020/21 survey which ran for three weeks last January received a total of 3,112 responses. This year's survey which launched on January 13 has already surpassed that figure in terms of responses.

The survey also invites people to leave any comments about policing in their area and this year. The PCC undertakes to read every single comment that is left which can help inform his and the Force's priorities.

The responses are categorised into a number of themes and a report is produced which is shared with Surrey Police to assist in their policing plans and engagement.

In addition to views gathered from the consultation, the PCC's office also receives regular correspondence and respond to various letters and emails from members of the public. In 2020, the office recorded 1,771 contacts from the public about various different issues such as anti-social behaviour, rural crime, speeding and Covid restrictions.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Police and Crime Panel note this report.

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