

Presentation by Superintendent Colin Paine,

Local Police Area Commander for Cherwell and West Oxfordshire

Superintendent Paine was welcomed to the meeting by the Mayor of Woodstock and thanked for attending. Superintendent Paine made a presentation to Cllrs and the member of the public present at the meeting the main points of which were as follows:

1. Crime

- a) Reported crime in West Oxfordshire has continued to fall. This year it has fallen by 5% and over the last 15 years has reduced by 50%. This year there have been 1.7 residential burglaries per week on average in West Oxfordshire so far this year.
- b) A communications challenge to the police is how to encourage the public to report crimes whilst not making them unduly fearful of these crimes.
- c) The crime figures in Woodstock are good and this is for several factors including the following:
 - Changed patterns of society
 - Better security
 - Reduced problematic drugs usage
 - Increased affluence
 - An aging population
- d) Improved methods used by the police to tackle crime e.g. problematic offenders are now visited regularly.
- e) The type of crime is changing and much more crime is now “hidden” e.g. cybercrime and organised criminal groups that operate like businesses.

2. Police Presence – only about 10% of policing is visible, the other 90% deals with problems such as domestic abuse, child abuse, tackling organised criminality and counter terrorism by way of examples. It is recognised that the public will tend to judge the overall effectiveness of the police by this highly visible 10% - that is neighbourhood policing.

3. Woodstock Police Station

- a) Thames Valley Police (TVP) faces financial challenges and must save between £20-£30m over the next 3 years in addition to the £53 million saved over the last 4 years.
- b) TVP has not cut neighbourhood policing or front line staff – 2 extra police officer posts have been created by the force this year in Cherwell and West Oxfordshire LPA. When PC Gordon Richardson retires he will be replaced.
- c) Over 80% of funding goes on staff costs so other non-staff costs need to be cut. TVP is therefore reducing its estate to the minimum and the land on which the Woodstock police station stands will be sold. This is as much about reducing the ongoing revenue costs as releasing the capital.
- d) Although staff have been moved to TVP Head Quarters the neighbourhood police team will be retained to provide a physical presence in Woodstock. One option for doing this is to retain a small office on the existing site. Other options will be considered.

- e) TVP has been approached by the local GP consortium who wish to buy the police station and site. TVP is sympathetic to this request but must get the best deal and so is taking things slowly to enable them time to make a bid. If the GP's can't find suitable funding the site may go on the open market.
4. The CLA Game Fair – although the responsibility for Traffic Management sits with the Game Fair organisers the Chief Constable has made it clear that TVP will help as well e.g. 8-10 police motor bikes are expected to be in attendance during the event. Furthermore the neighbourhood team will provide a presence to tackle parking issues. Cllrs considered it important that the liaison Cllr works closely with TVP.
5. Responses to Questions from Cllrs:
- a) Q: What is being done about distraction burglaries?
A: levels of this particularly unpleasant form of crime are plummeting. TVP has an aggressive approach to solving burglaries resulting in a good success rate. West Oxfordshire has not had a single distraction burglary this year.
- b) Q: OCC talk about turning the lives of problem families around – is this working?
A: It is early days and the way that OCC will measure success will be different from those used by TVP. TVP judges its strategy on crime levels by the figures reported.
- c) Q: Will the person replacing Gordon Richardson be a like for like replacement?
A: Yes
- d) Q: How much time will the GP's be given to raise the necessary funds to purchase the police station site?
A: There is not line in the sand but TVP needs to know something by around the end of January 2014.
- e) Q: Are the OCC cuts resulting in an increased need for policing?
A: There is always a risk that they may do so but no direct link has yet been seen. TVP would never wish to criticise partners who have to make very necessary cuts during this difficult time.
- f) Q: Is TVP aware of local opposition to residential development, and if so could TVP open up any meetings where this is to be discussed to residents?
A: The decision will be made on business grounds but TVP will try to listen to Woodstock residents.
- g) Q: A Cllr asked if the Superintendent was aware of any drug dealing behind a named location in Woodstock?
A: Superintendent Paine said that he was not aware of this and would have been if it had been a problem.

Cllrs asked that PCSO Phil Workman is thanked for arranging the recent visit by disabled children to the Abingdon Police Station – this was much appreciated.

END