

**Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council****Town Council Meeting - 28 January, 2020****Transcript Police and Crime Commissioner's Address & Questions*****Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner, Philip Secombe (PS):***

Good Evening and a Happy New Year to you all. Cyril has asked a good question and I've done some digging and some investigating – in Stratford Police Station we have a total of 163 officers and staff of which 70 are police officers, 6 are PCSOs and Specials are 4. So, we have 80 uniformed personnel and we have a staff of about 83 and the majority of our staff are from the Police Standards department and our Vetting department. Vetting earns us about a million pounds a year. We are national providers of vetting for contractors. There is a question about Stratford Police Station, about the roof – we are expecting to spend £350,000 on it of which £50,000 will probably be spent this year. So, I would hope that we would see in the next few weeks the scaffolding going up, doing the roof and completing it in a 6-month contract. We've got asbestos and every little thing under the sun, but I think it will protect the whole building. We are still looking at options for the court building, the unused court building on which we are paying rents and we have to keep it heated, so that is a topic under discussion at the moment and we are going to have a complete estates review once we have separated from West Mercia in the alliance.

***The Mayor:***

Thank you. Now we go on to written questions.

***PS:***

Since I came 9 months ago, at the end of April the majority of those officers are in patrol, 999 response and I hope that a) you will see more uniformed officers in Stratford as you go about business, and b) the response times are considerably shorter than they were three years ago when everybody came from Warwick for instance.

**Questions from Councillor Gill Cleeve – Town and District Councillor**

- 1) In your consultation you are asking for a minimum increase of 4.99%. You have stated that this increase is purely to meet inflation-related costs, salary

increases, pension liabilities and the requirement to recruit and train new officers. Also, you have said that if you only get the 4.99% there will be no further investments and you will be required to make savings in order to balance the books. In this instant what do you mean by 'make savings'? Do you mean cuts in the number of police officers?

- 2) Putting aside the budget for the police service itself, do you have any initiatives in mind that you need funding, that are designed to prevent crime and improve community safety in our area?

Right, the first question was about the consultation we did on the current precept setting procedures. At that time we didn't know what we were going to get, we didn't know how much government funding there was going to be, we didn't know if there would be any cap on the precept so we had to think of a figure that would be possible but we didn't know if it was going to be possible or not so we put the 4.99% in, as it happens we had the settlement six days ago – very late, we usually get it before Christmas as all local authorities do – and it was a good settlement, for the first time in ten years the government are going to put more into Warwickshire Police than the Council Tax payer which I'm pleased about. I've spent some time with ministers and the Home Secretary arguing that case. The cap is 4.38% so we can't go to 4.99% anyway. Interestingly, about 55% of respondents on our consultation were prepared to pay more than 4.99%. 30% weren't prepared to pay anything, they wanted a freeze on the Council Tax and 20% would be happy with the 4.99%. I think it's probably worth pointing out what we get extra – maximum of 4.38%, and I haven't set the level yet – we're doing that before next Tuesday with the Police and Crime Panel.

So, its worth looking at what we've done over the last few years. Leek Wooten has been designated at the Police Headquarters and we're spending between 2 – 3 million to bring that back up to speed. Every officer now has mobile working facilities with laptops and smartphones, all front-line officers have body worn video and that protects the public as well as the officer. We are about to open, I think in August, a new operational centre in Warwick. We've commissioned a number of pretty high services for the victims of crime. We've spent about 2.8 million on commissioning these services, most of them for victims. A lot of them I have to say for a crime that is particularly prevalent in the south of the county, domestic abuse. We have implemented a new policing model having had the termination letter from West Mercia, and we've recruited an additional 200 officers. So, this time last year we had 800 officers in the force, we have 1,004 today. 25% increase in 12 months, the biggest by far in the country. They will be spread equally around the county so Stratford will get their fare share. And finally, we established the new Rural Crime

Team, maybe not too applicable to Stratford Town, but that had been something that was lacking – one of the things that was flagged up to me.

So, what are we going to do with that additional money. Part of it will go towards financing 41 new officers which Warwickshire will get out of the first tranche of the government's £20,000 uplift. The second tranche will come in year three and we think we'll get about another hundred officers, so that will push Warwickshire well over 1,100 officers and it's never had that many in its 162-year history. So, I did make a big point with manifestos and everything else that I want to see the maximum number of officers deployed and we're now going to have over 1,100 in about 18 months. Of those 41 we've already recruited, we're ahead of the game, so it means we'll get the money early. We have an additional 13 detectives, and most have them have been put into a specialist child abuse, trafficking and exploitation team spread about the county. We have an additional 12 uniformed firearms and roads policing officers to be deployed across the county. Sadly, the amount of firearms response seems to be growing, there is more violence on our streets and our rural areas. An additional 10 officers will go into force patrol teams of which 5 will go into the north and 5 will go into the south. We're going to double the size of the rural crime team, with another 6 officers, taking it up to 12 and there will be a north team and a south team. We're building a new firearm licencing capability at Leek Wooten as the previous one was shared over at Malvern. Also, we have recruited 6 new inspectors to go into our control room, where before all instances were controlled from Hindlip in Worcestershire. We now have our own inspectors in the control room which is currently at Leek Wooten. And we have also put some investment into the support function, so with 200 new officers we need a bit more HR and other help behind the scenes. So, that's what you get for the council tax maximum rise which as I say is 4.38%. Without giving too much away I will be pretty close to that figure because we need the money.

**Mayor:**

That question came from Councillor Gill Cleeve. Gill, do you have any follow up to that?

**Cllr**

**Cleeve:**

Yes, thank you Madam Mayor. So, you're saying, because in your consultation you were hoping around 4.99% but you could go more. So, you're saying now the maximum is 4.39%?

**PS:**

It's capped at £10.00 on a Band D property. The government sets the cap.

## **Question from Councillor Cohl Warren-Howles – Town Councillor**

I have a close friend that is a Social worker in Birmingham, who until fairly recently lived in Stratford. We have talked a great deal about drugs being trafficked in Stratford. He is extremely concerned by County lines, and in light of the fact that Stratford has a growing issue with drugs, I think this question is pertinent:

'Children as young as 11 are being used as traffickers. Stratford has a high rate of County lines. What's being done in order to prevent or reduce the lines crossing our town & County?'

PS: Okay, County Lines is a huge challenge. I'm sure you've all read about the murder last week in Leamington Spa – that was a gang from London disputing an area for dealing drugs with a gang from Birmingham. None of the participants were anything to do with Warwickshire. Because we've had these County Lines coming into Warwickshire, often from outside, we tend to have to sort out the mess when it comes. All of the participants have now been arrested apart from the poor young lad that died who was 16 years old – he was stabbed to death. Which is horrific and happened pretty close to the centre of Leamington Spa. There has been a big effort to reassure residents of Leamington, that this is a one off, not inbred within the county. It's a significant problem. Often the County Lines are quite difficult to deal with. If you disrupt one, another one sets up within half an hour. These are businesses making huge amounts of money, the turnover is billions nationally and they are all good entrepreneurs and businessmen, so this is something we have to keep working at. What I would say is that the incident in Leamington was a classic cuckooing where they take over the premises of somebody who's vulnerable, and they start dealing the drugs at that address. This has happened in Stratford, I'm sure you're aware. What we're trying to do is to bring together the NHS the CCGs, the housing authorities, the fire service, the police, local authorities. It's everybody's business to look out for vulnerable people. Those of you that are County Councillors will know the MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) and there is a lot of really good work done there. If we didn't have these people praying on our vulnerable people in Warwickshire that would considerably reduce the amount of County Lines because they wouldn't provide them the base. There are lots of operations going on, covert and overt, about trying to disrupt these gangs. We have a very close working relationship with the Metropolitan Police and with West Midland Police where a lot of our offenders and indeed sometimes victims are coming from. So, it's high on the radar. I was very impressed with the way that the murder was dealt with and the investigations that are going on and the speed of the arrests that

were made following that. So, we are well aware that there has been considerable County Lines coming into Stratford and Sergeant Ryan has been mentioned in these questions has done a really good job working with all local partners to try and limit it but it is high on the radar.

**Mayor:**

Councillor Warren-Howles, do you have a follow-up?

**Cllr Warren-Howles:**

No, I think that Mr Seccombe has answered the question. My ward is Avenue, there's Joseph's Way, Peters Way – really high drug problems there and I'm very conscious that there is a lot of trafficking going on there. And my question was what measures are in place and I think that you have answered it within reason, it's a difficult question to answer, but yes it's really interesting to know what measures you have in place to stop County Lines.

**PS:**

It is very concerning, particularly for those that live nearby, who might be living on their own, that might be of some age etc. I get quite a lot of correspondence about it and I just hope that the response from the force is proportionate and is caring, listening to peoples' concerns about this. This is ruining the lives of some of our youngsters and we need to keep on top of it.

### **Questions from Councillor Jenny Fradgley – Town, District and County Councillor**

- 1) The nature of the police force is that officers move on quite often. I have found Sgt Ryan a caring, efficient and approachable officer. Wish him well but a formal introduction to his successor would help continuity with issues raised with him.
- 2) When are we getting our allocation of the 20,000 new officers promised by the Prime Minister? Will these be new officers, those moving force or replacements to cover those leaving or retiring?

**PS:**

There are one or two comments and one or two questions. I agree with you about Sergeant Ryan, he's very good, which is why he's been promoted and is moving on. I think it might be a good idea to ask his successor to come to the Town Council to explain what they can do and how they can work with you.

*Town Clerk:*

May I just say that we have made contact with him.

**PS:**

Good. I am sure they will come to the Town Council if asked politely. The 20,000 officers, I think I've probably answered that question unless you have got any follow up?

**Cllr J Fradgley:**

the follow up I have actually is when the new personnel comes in it would be quite useful to have a system in place where the police do the contacting so that as soon as they come in it can be a seamless passing over of information. This time it might happen very well, but I know in the past there has been quite a long period of difficulty in getting in touch with people.

**PS:**

I mean it's a two-way communication isn't it? We instruct all of our Safer Neighbourhood Teams to make contact and know who their County Councillors are for their patch, and their District Councillors. But I would ask you as Town and County Councillors to make an effort as well to get in touch with your SNT. They've nearly all got online newsletters and its much better than it was, that passage of information. They are there to solve problems. If in your area there is a particular behaviour or crime being committed the Safer Neighbourhood Team are there to go and investigate it and see what can be done by working with others as well.

3) I see from the HMICRS Peel Report 2018/19, I understand most recent report, that there are areas for improvement: (RI requires improvement – IA Inadequate)

- Investigating Crime RI: At times, the force does not have enough capacity and capability to cope with demand.
- Meeting current demands using resources RI: The force does not have suitable arrangements in place to make sure it can maintain the full range of public services when its alliance with West Mercia Police ends.
- Planning for the Future IA: As it defines its new, post-alliance operating model, the force must develop an accurate understanding of future demand pressures. The force recognises this. It needs to fully understand the demands on those services it currently shares with West Mercia Police. It is of paramount and immediate

importance to assure the continuation of these services beyond 8 October 2019.

- Fair Treatment of the Public RI: The workforce's training in both use of force and stop and search needs to be timely and up to date.

Bearing in mind the difficulties of the separation from West Mercia how have you been able to address this issue? Has the projected saving of £2M per annum from the merger been realised – or is the decoupling costing WCC Police Constabulary? Are you meeting, as I understand the instructed date to complete April 2020?

**PS:**

There is only so much I can say in a public meeting, you'll be aware that there is a legal case going on at the moment. The business about capacity and capability is improving considerably with those extra officers, particularly the extra investigators. Arrangements in place to make sure it can maintain the full range of public services: absolutely, we've rebuilt Warwickshire Police from the bottom upwards and as we stand at the moment we're about 75% standalone, in other words we were 90%+ within the alliance, we're now 75% standalone so all local policing and 21 services are now run, commanded, paid for solely by Warwickshire. We have another 17 transferring back to us at the end of March and then there will be 4 services that will continue within an alliance, sharing or hosting arrangement. And that's IT, you can't change your IT in a short time, we were due to spend 40 million on a new alliance IT, super infrastructure and roll out of all the wiring, servers, cloud storage and everything else. That, we have pulled out of and we are looking at sharing that with West Midlands Police who have a terrific, probably the best in the country, system with all that back-up already running so risk element is cut there.

The second point is forensics. As I'm sure you're aware, forensics is getting highly detailed, we're looking at people's mobile phones, DNA testing. Gathering of that forensic evidence is important. It's getting very technical and very expensive to do. So, we're looking that jointly with West Midlands Police too, we're talking to them and will happen eventually, I think it will go regional and then after that will go to national. We are trying to rebuild the force as you would expect over the next 10 – 20 years.

The third is transactional service. Talk to any cop or member of staff, very important. That's about payroll, pensions, making sure that everyone is properly recorded and receiving the salaries and everything that they deserve. And there is a little bit of transactional services in Human Resources. We're looking at doing that with West Midlands.

The last thing is file storage. We've got files 20, 30, 40 years old in a huge warehouse over in Worcestershire. We'll probably be keeping that arrangement

because it will be so expensive to a) split them all and b) move them somewhere else, where would we move them anyway? Eventually, they will expire, and we can have a big bonfire. So, its just those four services and we think we will be about 95% standalone as of 8 April.

The other thing that is worth saying is, you have probably read that after I came back in September the Home Secretary extended the alliance by 6 months at our request, because we were facing a cliff-edge as the other force were threatening to switch off all services. 80% of services were in Worcestershire, only 20% here in Warwickshire. I was actually a supporter of the alliance, I think it brought about £35 million worth of savings to both forces and to this day I do not know why they terminated it, you'd need to ask them. It has had huge consequences, its going to cost us considerable amounts of money – tens of millions to set up ourselves and we will be looking for reimbursement, if necessary at arbitration or in court for the money it has cost us, that is due to us because he who triggers the termination is responsible for the other party's costs. Its very important for Warwickshire's taxpayers, it's taken a huge amount of time, we've got lawyers, we've taken Councils' opinion on the agreements that this all flows from and we want to get it settled as soon as we possibly can. I fear that the other side are trying to kick the can a bit down the road on the basis that we will go away – we will not. So, that will be an ongoing challenge for all of us. It poses significant financial risks going forward over the next year or two because we need to budget for running the force. We don't know what we're going to get from the other side, we cannot put in our budget anything. We'll get something, but we don't know what that's going to be, and it will probably be a compromise at the end of the day. So, apart from that I think Warwickshire is more responsive to the crimes and the communities of Warwickshire. I think that we will look back on the termination of the alliance as something that wasn't perhaps necessary but it isn't all bad news, we are rebuilding some of those 48 services I think it is, at a cheaper cost, at a better standard than we were within the alliance. So, big is not always beautiful.

**Councillor I Fradgley – Town and District Councillor (on behalf of a Bishopton resident)**

With reference to your proposal to increase the police precept again would you please remind everyone how much it has risen in the last two years, and what benefit a further increase would be to the already hard-pressed council tax payer. I understand that once again rural crime has greatly increased, and would you please state by how much and also how many perpetrators have been apprehended.

Theft is now an ever-present threat not only in the rural community but also everywhere else. Those in the private sector cannot keep constantly increasing their



prices and it is time that this applies to the public sector. Data from the Home Office shows the chances of a theft resulting in a charge is just 5.4%

**PS:**

This is a bit of a statement – I am happy to answer questions if you have got one.

**Cllr I Fradgley:**

Data from the Home Office shows the chances of a theft resulting in a charge is just 5.4%. I wondered if you had a figure for Stratford.

**PS:**

I haven't, I suspect its about average, but I do not have a figure for Stratford. If you write to me, I could probably find out. That is not acceptable, I am not happy with that figure. There are a number of reasons which the Chief Constable would tell you and has told me as to why that is the case. One of them is the Crown Prosecution Service are pretty understaffed, they are turning down quite a bit of evidence. We've asked them to charge people and they're turning it down which is irritating when we've got the evidence. I am doing quite a lot on the Local Criminal Justice board to try and improve that relationship between the force and the Crown Prosecution Service and indeed the courts. I am sure you've all read that the courts are not being used very much – it's quite difficult to get a case into court. Of course, the Probation Service are also on that as well, and I want to see their performance improve as well. My job isn't just the Police Commissioner, I am a Crime Commissioner as well, so I spend quite a lot of time on criminal justice, working with other bodies who are involved in criminal justice in Warwickshire.

**Mayor:**

Thank you. Cllr I Fradgley, do you have a response?

**Cllr I Fradgley:**

The perception in Stratford is that crime is greatly on the increase. Would you agree with that and have you got any figures to tell us how the perpetrators have been apprehended and charged?

**PS:**

I only got that question this morning, so I would need to find out. Crime across Warwickshire has not risen, and it has not fallen, it has very much flat-lined over the last year. There are some good bits of news in there and there are some bad:

- Burglaries of residential properties have dropped by 12%. That is good news for us and our residents;

- Car crime has dropped by 15%;
- Anti-social behaviour has dropped by 25%

Those are really good things that residents should notice. What has gone up, as I've talked about before are those sexual and domestic abuse type crimes, and rape, and violence. So that's why we are putting those extra officers into firearms to look at the serious organised crime and why we are putting them into the exploitation of children and adults' team. So, it's a mixed bag. I suspect that Stratford is following those trends. There has been a significant interception of the car crime and residential burglary which is good. Lots of specific operations have gone on to reduce that.

**Mayor:**

We will move on to open questions. May I just briefly ask something about what you have just said? I am on the Police Panel with Karin Stanley and I get all the information and I appreciate that you tell me that anti-social behaviour has dropped but we have just gone through a pretty poor, nasty, wet winter and it always increases in the lighter evenings and the warmer evenings. Would you say that's correct?

**PS:**

The figures I quoted are on the calendar year 2019. So, over the whole year, they dropped. It's still too high, but it has dropped significantly, well at least the reporting of it has dropped significantly, because there are some that go unreported I'm sure. We have had a big campaign to encourage people to report all sorts of crime, if the police don't know about a crime how can they possibly respond to it?

**Mayor:**

Thank you. Councillor Fojtik?

**Cllr Fojtik:**

As you know from yourself being a District Councillor, I represent Clopton wards on the Town and the District Councils, and you probably already know that it's got high levels of deprivation. Highest levels of deprivation in Stratford district. What I've been getting back from residents is that for some residents there is a lack of trust in the police. So, the question really is, what are the police doing to increase trust? Some people that live in this ward are reluctant to report crime for a variety of reasons and one example is one family reported a crime, a police officer came to the house, and the police officer was more concerned about the car parked on the drive than in the crime that they wanted to report. This is particularly important in wards like Clopton, Avenue, Bishopton where County Lines is so damaging to local

communities, and its local community and residents in those communities that are essential to reporting crimes that are happening. It's all based on trust so like I said, the question is what are you doing to increase the trust?

**PS:**

Well the first thing we're doing is to spread a message that all victims and witnesses of crime must report it. We're making it easier for people to report, there's now an online form, so you can now report a crime online which is perhaps preferable than waiting in a queue. Just recently we put in some new pilot schemes in the control room and the average time to answer a call on 101 has been cut in half, it has gone down from over a minute to just under half a minute which is good news. There is a huge volume of calls coming in and they are rising. We need to refine the online form a little bit because the danger is that if people report online an officer then has to ring back to find out more details. When I've been to public meetings people have said that they have used the online form and they found it easier. I'd be happy to come and meet some of your residents if it is a real problem, I have done that in other parts of Warwickshire, and listen to what they have to say and to reassure them that there is somebody out there to help. The police is what I call the last resort and I'm aware that when somebody rings the police they are in a very vulnerable or weak or nervous position and they do expect to get a proper and proportionate response. So, if you have individual examples, let me have them and I will look into them, because Warwickshire Police has to police by consent and that means you've got to work with all the residents. There has to be trust, that's the one thing that worried me, that the trust is gone. If there is no trust both sides will not understand the other and there will be no communication and that is bad for everybody.

**Mayor:**

Thank you. Councillor Vos?

**Cllr Vos:**

I may have missed the very beginning or misunderstood, you talked briefly following Cyril about the £350,000 and you alluded to plans for the magistrates court and I asked a question in September and your office replied the following: "the Commissioner has signed off a large scale refurbishment to the police station to ensure the police facilities remain in the town. In the meantime, the PCC approved funding for the re-roofing of the building as the current one is in poor condition and needs replacing, with a budget of around £500,000 to complete the works." You're now saying £350,000, I wasn't sure if that was just for the roof or the whole offices? And it finishes off by saying "the exact scope of the refurbishment will be known once we know what functions will be based there, as the intention is to bring back

parts of the building that have been empty for some time.” So that was 5 months ago, am I right in saying that you haven’t now got those plans lined up, as it does say here that you would. What I’d like to know is on the exact scope of the refurbishment how much extra are you expecting on this larger scale refurbishment to cost on top of the now £350,000 not £500,000 and can you advise exactly what plans have been approved for the Police Station and Magistrates Court?

**PS:**

The £350,000 is the competitive quote we received whereas our agent said we should budget £500,000. That is for the roof for the whole building. I hope that sends a message to Stratford that the police are here to stay on that site. It is a valuable site; I am aware of that but I’m not aware we’d be able to find anything else that close to the centre of Stratford without amount of parking. Stratford is a world-renowned place, and it needs a functioning police station in the middle of it. We’re also working with the County Council. Police are looking at some targeted hardening measures for potential terrorist actions in the town. I’m sure it will go up for planning permission and the Town Council would be involved in that. The court building is empty, it’s been empty for too long but we’re going to have to have a review of all of the estate all around the county to see whether we need to keep that and to put some teams and some services into the court building. We have had a number of approaches from the private sector who I think would take it and rent it off, which is an option – bringing a few more jobs to the town. So, we’ll have to wait and see. We may put some police teams into it. All I will say is that the Warwickshire Police estate is in pretty good shape, we don’t have lots of old Victorian buildings that cost a fortune to maintain, they’re all fairly modern. Although, the 60s/70s Stratford building is now ready for some new windows, a new roof etc. Any change of use would have to come with planning permission, but I’m not aware of anything about to be put in. I’d hope that something on the future of it would be decided within a few months rather than years.

**Cllr Vos:**

So, do we have a deadline or is that still a bit open? Will the plans be made public? Because there is a lot of interest in it – it’s not an iconic building, but it is a substantial building.

**PS:**

I did successfully persuade the force to keep the front counter at Stratford open.

**Cllr Vos:**

Yes, but a deadline on plans – any idea when that might be?

**PS:**

Not at this moment, but everything is being considered.

**Mayor:**

We will take the final question from Councillor Ian Fradgley.

**Cllr I Fradgley:**

I wanted to ask the police for their assistant on a Town Council project in installing a bus shelter on Trinity Mead. We've had one or two problems with the residents, who mostly agreed to the bus shelter. We have got someone who will install it for us but when they come to do it, they need to occupy the one lane of the road for about 4 hours so that they can install it. The problem we have got is that on the other side of the road on the lane going the other way there are sometimes cars parked there. The County Council advised us that there are no parking restrictions on this road and the best idea is that we ask the police for some cones to stop parking on the other side of the road.

**PS:**

I'm sure you're aware, parking has been decriminalised in Stratford district. North Warwickshire, it is still a police responsibility. Having said that, if a crime has been committed, an obstruction, the police would get involved. But putting out cones, yellow lines, whatever it might be is the highway authority, the County Council. So, if there has been a crime or anti-social behaviour been committed there – report it.

**Cllr I Fradgley:**

The advice of the County Council said talk to the police and ask them for some cones to put on that section of road. We have had some anti-social behaviour on this stretch because we tried to install it a couple of weeks ago and somebody deliberately parked a van opposite so we couldn't install it, because it meant the traffic couldn't get through, the bus couldn't get through. It was done deliberately I understand because the person who parked their van there didn't want the bus shelter.

**Mayor:**

I would suggest that you talk to PCSO Dominic Bes-Jeary because he will probably stand there where the van is and get them to move. Councillors, I think that has been very interesting. I just want to say thank you very much for coming this evening, we really appreciate it.