

ESSEX POLICE IS *CHANGING*

In the face of unprecedented challenges, Essex Police has to change. The series of proposals announced today are intended to:

- Make the Essex Police property estate fit for the future
- Improve public contact between police and the communities we serve
- Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of policing

The financial challenges are clear and stark. Essex Police is anticipating cuts of around £63 million by 2019-20, on an annual budget of around £262 million. Around 83 per cent of the budget is spent on the salaries of police officers, PCSOs and police staff. With £1 million paying for 20 police constables for a year, these financial challenges inevitably mean that Essex Police's workforce will become significantly smaller over the next few years.

But there are policing challenges too. Some of the most serious crime now happens not on our streets but behind closed doors and online. More resources and greater intelligence must be used to tackle horrific crimes such as child sexual exploitation. Essex Police must take ever greater account of risk and the vulnerability of victims. Policing must respond, develop and adapt to these emerging threats.

The new model of policing for Essex has been developed in the clear knowledge that it is police officers, not buildings, that solve crimes and keep communities safe. The current police property estate is in a parlous state, with poorly maintained buildings in the wrong place failing to serve operational need. Essex Police needs modern fit for purpose accommodation in the right locations to meet the challenges of policing for the next 20 years.

The current property estate is haemorrhaging money. Essex Police's 80 buildings require £30 million of maintenance work to bring up to standard and expenditure of almost £2 million a year just to maintain the current condition. Most of the buildings are inefficient and not designed for a modern policing purpose. Based on careful analysis the plan is to reduce the estate from 80 to 30 buildings strategically placed around Essex.

There are currently 25 police stations with front

counters in Essex. The plan is to reduce this number to 10 front counters by April 2016, with locations determined by footfall and geography.

Essex Police proposes to retain front counters, open to the public from 9am to 5pm, in: Grays, Basildon, Southend, Harlow, Chelmsford, Maldon, Saffron Walden, Braintree, Colchester and Clacton. Operational policing bases, without front counters, will be kept in: Loughton, Brentwood, Canvey Island, Rayleigh and Harwich.

Even with these proposed changes, Essex Police will still have significantly more front counter opening hours than other police services both in the region and nationally.

One consequence of reducing the number of front counters is that fewer police staff posts will be needed. Formal consultation has now begun with Unison over proposals to reduce Contact Customer Administrator posts from 98 to 36. If the proposals are implemented, affected staff will either be retained in post, redeployed to other roles or, sadly, face redundancy.

The number of people who visit police station front counters is low, and less than one in ten of those visitors reports a crime or other incident. Overwhelmingly, people say that they want to report crime and contact police by other means such as by telephone, email or online. A flexible, modern, approach to contact between the public and police is needed. It is planned that by April 2016, people will be able to contact Essex Police and report crime online as well as by telephone. In addition, through this autumn's public engagement programme, other ways of delivering face-to-face contact with police will be explored across our county.

It is also proposed to create a new Essex Police Headquarters which is fit for the future. The current Essex Police Headquarters site in Springfield is made up of numerous buildings some of which are around 100 years old, sprawling across 20 acres of land. The use of the Springfield site is highly inefficient, costing £2.5 million more each year than is necessary, and this hinders effective working. The current Headquarters is located on highly valuable residential land. Selling the Springfield site and unlocking its value provides the opportunity for building a new modern fit for purpose Essex Police Headquarters. Negotiations for a new site are at an advanced stage, and details will be announced shortly.

Perhaps the most fundamental changes proposed are to local policing. Research shows that 80 per cent of crime is committed by 20 per cent of criminals, and Essex Police will continue to target the offenders who cause the most harm. However, in the face of significant budget cuts, there will inevitably be fewer police officers and PCSOs on our streets, and their work will need to be increasingly intelligence-led. Patrolling will be targeted, for instance on emerging hot spot areas or at closing time in our busy town centres.

It is proposed to reduce the number of PCSO posts in Essex from 250 to 60. Formal consultation has begun with Unison around these proposals. PCSOs and front counter staff are highly professional and valued. If these proposals are implemented, Essex Police will seek to redeploy affected staff where possible. However ultimately, staff will either be retained in post, redeployed to other roles or, regrettably, face redundancy.

Essex Police must stay connected with the communities of our county. So, it is proposed to create ten Community Policing Teams, one in each District Policing Area, based in Community Safety Hubs, and working closely with partners.

Local policing will be delivered by:

- Community Policing Teams engaged in local problem solving
- 24/7 Response teams dealing with 999 emergency calls and crime
- CID teams of detectives investigating serious crimes
- Specialist domestic abuse teams

The new Community Policing Teams will focus on the following tasks:

- Problem solving around emerging crime series and hotspots, including high risk or repeat Anti-Social Behaviour
- Working with partners to address local issues
- Supporting the most vulnerable victims
- Managing the night time economy
- Engaging with local communities

Each Community Policing Team will be led by an Inspector and Sergeant, working with Police Constables and PCSOs. Over time, the team will be co-located with local authority partners. Community Policing Teams will also include Youth Officers, Licensing Officers and Crime Prevention Officers.

These changes are driven by both the changing nature of crime and financial challenges. Effective partnership work with local authorities, the other blue light services and the voluntary sector will become increasingly important.

The Chief Constable and Police and Crime Commissioner are determined that Essex Police will continue to keep our county safe both now and for the future.