

Broomley and Stocksfield Parish Council

Notes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at 7.30pm on Monday 20 April 2015
at Stocksfield Community Centre

Present: Ms M Hunt (Chair), Ms V Baird (Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Northumbria), Nicola Musgrove (Chief Inspector Communities), Julie Cole (Inspector East Tynedale), Mr S Duffy (Office of PCC), Gemma Brown (Hexham Courant) and 34 other residents of Stocksfield

Apologies: Mr M Parker, Mrs M Martin.

The Chair welcomed those present and introduced Ms Vera Baird, the PCC for Northumbria, Chief Inspector Nicola Musgrove and Inspector Julie Cole.

Ms Baird began by explaining her role as being the elected representative of the public to ensure the police deliver the services that the public need and expect. She appoints and has the power to dismiss the Chief Constable. This is a very significant shift of power to the public. Critically the PCC is not a police officer and does not run the police.

When elected in November 2012, Ms Baird began an extensive consultative exercise to identify the priorities for policing. Five priorities were identified and have not changed:

- Putting Victims at the heart of the criminal justice system
- Antisocial behaviour (ASB)
- Sexual and Domestic Abuse
- Cutting Crime and
- Community Confidence

An extensive programme of dealing with ASB has been established with an undertaking to attend within an hour if a victim is identified as vulnerable and to ensure that all vulnerability issues are identified. The impact of ASB can be far greater than many 'crimes', particularly where the victim is vulnerable. There has been an impressive change in the perceptions of police about ASB.

Domestic and Sexual Violence remain prominent, with 82 calls a day to Northumbria Police in respect of domestic abuse. There has been a significant increase in recorded rape and sexual offences but this appears to be an increase in reporting levels rather than an increase in actual levels of crime. One project in Newcastle and Sunderland sees domestic abuse workers patrolling with officers and attending incidents immediately after the initial police response has been made.

Crime continues to decline but the picture is not entirely clear in respect overall. The annual figures from the Crime Survey for England and Wales are down ?

Community Confidence is about visible officers in neighbourhoods. The Chief Constable has dedicated her priority to this despite the loss of £117M, 600 police officers and 40% of police staff. The area command structures have changed again from six to three, reducing a section of middle management – all about ensuring officers remain on the street.

Ms Baird added that the PCC is required to work with Community Safety Partnerships to prevent crime and support victims and has a statutory obligation to work with all partners within the criminal justice system. Two areas of responsibility have been added. The first relates to restorative justice – bringing victims and offenders together although there are a wide range of options involved. And the second relates to Victims First – a charity providing

victim support which is closely linked to Northumbria Police. Ms Baird is a director of the charity and since its inception on 1 April it has handled 550 cases with 6% of referrals from outside the police.

Ms Baird said there has been a need to close old and costly police stations but that this has not affected the service delivered locally. A local base where visibility has been maintained has always been provided. She outlined the various closures around the force. In respect of Prudhoe, she said that response officers are now stationed at Hexham but the location of the new base at Prudhoe has not been decided.

The Chair thanked Ms Baird for her presentation and asked the PCC whether the balance between rural and urban policing had been affected by the cuts. Ms Baird reiterated the Chief Constable's view that there would be no reduction in policing priorities in rural areas. Chief Inspector Musgrove said the most recent reorganisation now made available a greater number of officers for deployment wherever they are needed. Additionally the daily meeting and planning structure recognised the unique conditions of rural policing.

Ms Baird was asked a number of questions by residents concerning

- The future challenges given the likely cuts ahead irrespective of which party is in government
- Effectiveness of the 101 service
- Morale and safety issues considering the loss of police numbers
- How to deal with cold callers
- Speeding on New Ridley Road

During the questions, the importance of reporting all issues to the police was reinforced. The police encourage the public to contact them to report suspicious activity – local residents are more likely to recognise things that are out of the ordinary.

The Chair thanked the PCC again for taking time to address the Parish Meeting and Chief Inspector Musgrove and Inspector Cole for their contribution. She reassured the PCC that we recognise that Stocksfield is a low crime area, despite the recent spate of burglaries. There is a good relationship with the police and she reiterated the point made by Inspector Cole that the public must tell the police when something is going on. We should be less concerned that it is nothing of importance. The Chair said that we would put something on the website, including the contact details for the PCC. Inspector Cole added that if anyone wanted to receive the Community Messages from the neighbourhood policing team, she would take details at the end of the meeting.

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 14 April 2014

The minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting were accepted as a true and accurate record.

Matters Arising

The issue of Neighbourhood Watch (NHW) signs was raised. Inspector Cole said she would be happy to arrange a meeting of anyone interested in being a NHW co-ordinator but the scheme is no longer run by the police. Without a NHW scheme in place, access to new signage is not available.

Annual Report of the Chair

The Chair highlighted a number of areas referred to within her previously circulated annual report including

- Community Defibrillators
- Peace Garden
- New Parish Clerk

- New Ridley Development
- Northumberland Local Plan
- Increase in Crime
- Work of the Rights of Way and Environment Group
- Enhancements to the Parish Council website

She added that it had been brought to the attention of the Parish Council recently that work had been undertaken with drilling rigs at Merryshields Farm and the Parish Council is monitoring the situation.

Report of the Ward County Councillor

Mrs Dale said that her written report was a snapshot of her work during the year and that she was happy to discuss any aspects with residents, either in person or email. She highlighted the Tour of Britain, which is to travel through Stocksfield and that Northumberland County Council face similar cuts in the years ahead.

Accounts 2014/15

The Chair referred to the previously circulated accounts which were as yet unaudited.

Budget 2015/16

The proposed budget for 2015/16 had been previously circulated and was noted.

Any Other Business

None

The Chair thanked all residents for attending and taking the opportunity to listen to the Police and Crime Commissioner. She reminded those who wanted to receive the Community Messages from the police to speak to Inspector Cole and closed the meeting.