



Suffolk Police Update

Press Officer: Simon Stevens

Date: 30.03.11

Time: 09:00

51

Event / crime number: HMIC – frontline policing

Place a cross in box as appropriate:

Proactive Response

Reactive Response

Strictly Confidential

Suffolk Constabulary response to HMIC report “Demanding Times: The Frontline and Police Visibility.”

Suffolk’s Chief Constable Simon Ash said:

“The foundations of our policing service in Suffolk are the 30 Safer Neighbourhood Teams.

“They maintain a highly-visible presence as they work in their communities to tackle the issues that matter to local people, working alongside colleagues who provide emergency response to incidents across the county.

“We have worked hard over the last three years to develop a policing model which maximises our resources on the front-line – and gets the balance right between emergency response and community policing.

“As such, we take some satisfaction that this latest report from Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) shows that Suffolk is in the top five forces when it comes to the average percentage of visible police officers and police community support officers available for duty.

“Local people have told us consistently over the years that they want to see the police out in their communities dealing with anti-social behaviour – and the fact that confidence levels have increased so dramatically in Suffolk* suggests that our officers are having a positive impact.

“However, in viewing this report, we must remember that policing is not just about the frontline. There are many roles in modern-day policing which are not visible to the public but perform vital roles to help keep our communities safe, such as handling intelligence, managing offenders through the criminal justice system and tackling internet-based crime.

“It is also important to note that the figures about frontline visibility are affected by the 24/7 nature of policing, in particular the shift system. In essence, the maximum availability of frontline officers and staff at anyone time is estimated as between 16-20% of dedicated resources.

“In the financially challenging months ahead, we will continue to work closely with the Police Authority to match our resources to demand while aiming to protect our frontline policing presence as much as possible.”

BACKGROUND: Latest figures from the British Crime Survey show that the 54.6% of people agreed that the police and councils in Suffolk are dealing with the anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter in their area. This places Suffolk 8th out of 43 police force areas nationally – a rise of 29 places since June 2009.

A Suffolk Federation spokesman said: “While we are glad that a definition has been sought on what the frontline of policing is, the fact this definition has been sought after cuts have been proposed is like a house built without foundations. First came the HMIC report commissioned by the government which stated cuts to police budgets over 12% would have a detrimental effect on frontline policing. Then the government's Comprehensive Spending Review announced 20% cuts will be made to police budgets but won't affect frontline response. Swiftly followed by two reports recommending cuts to police pay, allowances and pensions and by so doing; damaging morale on the frontline. And then the latest offering; a definition of what the frontline actually is. Without wanting to state the obvious this approach seems more about quick fix budget solutions than the holistic review of policing that is so urgently needed. What the report does highlight is that Suffolk is the third most 'highly visible' force in England & Wales despite having 300 police officers less than their most similar sized forces, and it is this that brings home the reality that we are already one of the most efficient police forces to be found. This is testament to the flexibility of the very same police officers who the Government are now directly attacking through their pension, pay and conditions. The effect of a 20% cut to the overall policing budget in Suffolk cannot be achieved without affecting 'front line services' - there's precious little left to cut other than people or services, and we already know that there will be fewer police staff due to redundancies and fewer police officers due to forced retirements - with no recruitment for the foreseeable future. Suffolk Police Federation calls upon the elected representatives of this Government across Suffolk to stand up and support the Constabulary, it's police staff and police officers before it's too late.”