

**NOTES FROM PUBLIC MEETING
WITH POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR GLOS, MARTIN SURL,
AND HIS DEPUTY, CHRIS BRIERLEY**

**CHAired BY COUNTY COUNCILLOR PAUL HODGKINSON,
ON WEDNESDAY 1ST FEBRUARY 2017 AT 6PM AT
THE GEORGE MOORE COMMUNITY CENTRE, BOURTON ON THE WATER**

In attendance: PCC Martin Surl
Deputy PCC Chris Brierley
Policing Inspector for the Cotswolds Karen Ellis
PC Jason Page
PCSO Mel Oliveira
County Cllr Paul Hodgkinson
Members of Bourton on the Water Parish Council, and local residents

Introduction:

Cllr Hodgkinson advised that the meeting had been called in response to concerns expressed by a number of local residents regarding the increasing frequency and scale of local anti-social behaviour incidents across a range of types of behaviour, and concerns at the lack of resources within the local Policing team to be able to tackle these issues. This is having a significant detrimental impact on community life, and is also harmful to the image of Bourton as a popular tourist destination. Given the local population has increased significantly within a very short space of time as a result of recent major residential development, residents are concerned that without specific action this behaviour will continue unchecked or increase further, and become an unacceptable part of life within the growing community.

Public comments:

Residents expressed various concerns regarding anti-social behaviour which primarily occurs from evenings onwards in two specific areas of the village – the Village Green and Melville playing field. The incidents arise from groups gathering in numbers making excessive noise, and using foul and abusive language to passers by, which can also be intimidating and threatening at times; it also involves the suspected use and sale of drugs, and occasionally physical damage to property. Those responsible appear to be aged from 14 up to early 20 year olds; it's felt that adult sanctions should therefore be available and enforceable to the older age range.

Residents are reluctant to confront those responsible and are fearful of reporting incidents due to potential retribution, and are frustrated at the lack of visible foot patrols or prompt response from the local Police team when reports are made.

PCC response:

Martin Surl sympathised completely with residents frustrations, but advised that as a result of severe budget cuts beyond the Constabulary's control (£30m budget reduction over the past 5 years) it would continue to be difficult to achieve a net gain in policing manpower in Gloucestershire. The numbers of Police and Community Support Officers will therefore continue to be limited in the immediate future, as any future recruitment must also enable a response to be provided across a number of relatively new areas of modern technology-related crimes, thereby preventing any real gain in traditional police force numbers.

He stressed that a more realistic understanding of a modern neighbourhood police force is required in light of ongoing financial constraints. In the current climate, when resources are and will continue to be stretched, there is an even greater need for different parties to play a role in assisting the Police, which can include local councils being pro-active in making gathering places less "attractive". Inspector Ellis stressed the direct link between the provision of local knowledge to the Police in a form that will lead to arrests and successful prosecutions, and the constant reporting of incidents that will provide evidence to enable limited resources to be directed when and where statistics indicate there is a need.

Identified actions:

- Police:
- to recognise that whilst ASB may not have the same immediate impact as more serious crimes, the fact that it occurs over long periods of time on a daily basis can be as, if not more, damaging to a community's well-being;
 - to support communities through the allocation of funding from grants for initiatives or equipment that can help reduce ASB;
 - to ensure resident concerns regarding reductions in neighbourhood policing levels are "passed up the chain" in respect of future funding levels;
 - to respond promptly to any increased reporting of ASB incidents and allocate resources appropriately;
- Residents:
- to be encouraged to report all instances of anti-social behaviour via 101 or e-mail, even when they may feel there could be little or no immediate response. This will deliver long-term benefits in providing recorded evidence of problems and patterns of ASB that the Police team can act on when allocating resources. ASB statistics for Bourton currently indicate a drop in this type of crime; this emphasises the difference in the number of reported and unreported incidents and lack of written evidence to support resident claims regarding an increasing problem.
 - to be willing to provide evidence to the Police in a form that will help the Police follow up reports with arrests or other sanctions appropriate to the age range. Whilst a general reluctance to get involved is very understandable, information regarding names, ages, description or home addresses, wherever possible, plays a key role in leading to arrests. This is even more relevant in the Cotswolds where police resources are spread across a wide geographical area and response times will naturally be greater, even at the best of times.
- Councils:
- Consider ways to make all known gathering "hot-spots" less attractive, and whether funding can be allocated where equipment can help mitigate or reduce problems. This includes:
 - considering all potential gathering places within the same exercise to ensure the problem doesn't simply "get passed on" elsewhere;
 - the installation of CCTV monitors – expenditure could potentially be subject to grant funding, or cost sharing with other communities;
 - identifying and reducing the availability of wi-fi hot-spots;
 - consider removing seating areas where possible;
 - lobbying MP's to seek a restoration of funding for community policing as an integral element to localism and response to government's stance in favour of development;
 - encouraging residents to be pro-active in reporting of crimes and ASB;

Summary:

Martin Surl expressed the firm view that the problems in Bourton can be resolved within a reasonable time-frame through partnership working and ongoing dialogue. It was agreed that all parties would consider the above, and implement proposals relevant to their areas of responsibility wherever possible. A meeting between all parties will be arranged after 3 months to review the situation and the impact of any completed actions.