

ACRA Meeting with Martyn Underhill (MU), Police and Crime Commissioner 19th February 2014

ACRA were represented by: Mike Collard (ACRA Chairman – SAMRA); Nigel Cook (Christchurch Citizens); and Jim Biggin (ACRA Secretary – WCRA)

A. Year 2013-14

ACRA asked MU how much progress he had made in his first full year of office. He responded by referring to the key tasks highlighted in his election manifesto:

1. **Putting the victim first:** MU has made considerable progress on this vital front. Amongst other measures, the Dorset Victims Bureau opened in November 2013 (and at that time was one of only two such organisations in England and Wales). The Bureau updates and supports victims of crime and its work is supplemented by the newly introduced Victims Forums. A website dedicated to victims is also planned.
2. **Cutting crime and catching more criminals:** MU's plans associated with Dorset's prisons were derailed by actions taken by Central Government. At the moment none of Dorset's prisons are being used and prisoners are being housed in neighbouring counties. MU has had some success in expanding Neighbourhood Watch with 34 new ones formed in 2013 and 41 Community Speed Watch organisations have been formed. Dorset Police are now catching 1 in 4 perpetrators – an improvement on the previous 1 in 5.
3. **Anti-social behaviour:** this is work in progress and a multi-agency approach is planned for 2014
4. **Tackling domestic violence:** again work in progress but Clare's Law (which enables people to check the police record of their partners) was introduced into Dorset in August 2013
5. **Increased police visibility:** the number of Special Constables has been doubled to include Marine Specials, Rural Specials, and other areas of particular expertise. The number of volunteers has also doubled. Funds have been allocated to provide a tablet computer for every police officer during 2014. Central Government are proving difficult on the subject of incentives for Special Constables.
6. **Reduce re-offending:** the top 100 offenders in Dorset have been identified. Initiatives in restorative justice and neighbourhood justice panels have commenced.
7. **Rural and Marine Policing:** the Dorset Police Marine Section, previously threatened with closure, has been saved and a partnership with Harbour Authorities has been created. The number of Rural Special Constables has increased by 46.
8. **Value for money:** the funding of Dorset Police has already been cut by £20 million with further cuts of £15 million in total spread over the next three years. MU is exploring collaboration with other local forces (particularly Devon and Cornwall) including joint working of specialist units such as firearm units and murder squad detectives. A Joint Independent Audit Committee has been formed. An Ethics Committee has been created to oversee the application throughout Dorset of The Nolan Principles (see Appendix 1)
9. **Listening to people:** Champions have been appointed for young people and older people along with victim forums and surgeries
10. **Securing more funding:** this is very much ongoing work involving working with partners and trying to make the Central Government funding formula work to the benefit of Dorset

(easier said than done!). MU is considering appointing self-funding sponsorship and revenue-raising personnel

B. Year 2014-15

ACRA then asked what specific targets MU had for 2014-15, particularly bearing in mind his planned increase of 1.95% in the Council Tax allocation for Dorset Police. He highlighted five key initiatives:

1. **Body Cams:** it is planned to issue every officer with a body cam to film and record key events. This will both assist officers by, for example, moderating the behaviour of members of the public they approach whilst also making the officers themselves more accountable.
2. **Tackle cyber-crime:** this will involve both cyber-enabled crime (old tricks in a modern guise) and cyber-dependent crime (specially invented for the 21st century). The first phase will be an awareness programme that will involve writing to every household in Dorset. Very few people realise that cyber-crime represents the largest criminal threat to residents of Dorset.
3. **Increase the number of police vehicles by 7:** this is particularly relevant to rural areas which in this context could include outer areas of Christchurch
4. **Recruit 16 new officers:** the past freeze on police recruitment has skewed the age distribution of Dorset Police and it is essential that new young blood is introduced
5. **Introduce a PIN for regular users of the 101 system:** this will enable regular users of 101 (foster carers for example) to by-pass the repetitive giving of standing information such as name and address and to move more easily onto the important part of the call

MU gave an undertaking that he would not seek to increase the Council Tax allocation in 2015-16

C. Sundry Matters

ACRA asked about the systems used by the police for issuing such things as crime reports.

MU confirmed that a new system (currently used by another police force) will be introduced during 2014. It will embrace social media as well as conventional e-mail. He also undertook to look at the system for issuing flood warnings which recently appeared not to have worked as well as it might have done in Stanpit and Mudeford

ACRA asked about the future Safer Neighbourhood Schemes.

MU confirmed his commitment to such schemes and indicated that there should not now be any further shrinkage of police support for the schemes

ACRA thanked MU for his time and looked forward to meeting him again in February 2015

Jim Biggin

February 2014

Appendix 1: The Nolan Principles

- **Selflessness** – Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.
- **Integrity** – Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.
- **Objectivity** – In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.
- **Accountability** – Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
- **Openness** – Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.
- **Honesty** – Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.
- **Leadership** – Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.