

High price of Surrey police officer's false report

8 November 2024



An ex-police officer has been banned from the profession after she “maliciously” made a “false” complaint about child sexual abuse to the NSPCC, a misconduct hearing has ruled. The former Surrey officer, PC Tina Anscombe was found culpable of providing false and very misleading information to the NSPCC about a family.

Ms Anscombe has maintained she genuinely believed her concerns were valid and has denied any wrongdoing. The police misconduct hearing panel, held on November 5 and 6, found Ms Anscombe breached professional standards of behaviour as she acted dishonestly and with the purpose of causing harm to a mother and her family.

Recognising the potentially “devastating impact” the false claim could have had on the individual and the family, the panel found Ms Anscombe to have undermined public confidence and trust in the police.

Ms Anscombe was found to have made a referral to the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) about child sexual abuse “in bad faith” on April 30, 2020. Representing Surrey Police, Robert Talalay claimed that former PC Anscombe had “abused her powers” as a police officer to potentially act as “revenge”.

The panel heard Ms Anscombe had stated in the referral form that Mrs XY was aware of the potential abuse and was not addressing her responsibilities as a mother. Mr Talalay told the panel the former PC had given the impression she was close to the family, suggesting she had seen them ‘one month ago’, when she had never laid eyes on the family. She also indicated she witnessed behaviour she had referred to on the form.

Children’s Services visited the family in direct response to the NSPCC report and found the allegations were “baseless and unsound”, according to Surrey Police’s legal representative.

Speaking on behalf of Ms Anscombe, Tom Arthur said at the misconduct meeting, that the former PC felt “duty bound” to share the information about alleged child abuse. He said her only concern was to safeguard the children.

The former officer, who did not attend the hearing, appealed to the panel to consider her state of mind and the “shame” she felt at work as her colleagues knew her then-husband, a Detective Constable with the force, was going through misconduct proceedings. He was sacked in December 2020, following allegations of a sexual relationship with someone he met during the course of his duties. Ms Anscombe resigned from Surrey Police after 21 years of service in October 2021.

At the hearing this week, Ms Anscombe was found to have breached her responsibilities in failing to identify herself as a police officer to the NSPCC or raising her safeguarding concerns with a sergeant within Surrey Police. Mr Talalay argued Ms Anscombe had submitted “false and misleading information” to the NSPCC as she did not identify herself as a ‘professional’ but as ‘other relative’ without explaining further detail in the form.

The misconduct panel heard the ex-officer did not go through the usual channels to report potential child abuse, which she could have done through her sergeant at work. Ms Anscombe said she feared if she reported her concerns to the sergeant, her actions would be labelled as malicious. Instead, she chose to anonymously refer the family via the NSPCC.

The misconduct panel found that Ms Anscombe’s behaviour had amounted to gross misconduct and, if she was still a serving officer, she would have been dismissed without notice. Ms Anscombe will be placed on the barred list from other police forces and the Fire and Rescue Service.

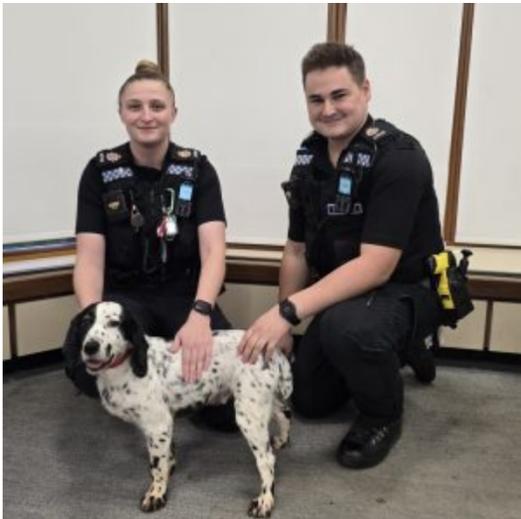
Chief Superintendent Andy Rundle, Head of Professional Standards Department, said: “The public rightly expects officers to behave in a professional manner, with the highest standards of honesty, integrity, and respect. Former officer Anscombe showed a clear disregard for these expected behaviours when she made a false allegation to the NSPCC, identifying herself as the relative of a family with whom she had no previous contact.

“Within this allegation, she made an inaccurate claim, which further subjected a family to unnecessary investigation and intrusion. Anscombe’s behaviours demonstrated a lack of respect for the family and was a clear breach of the standards of behaviour expected of a police officer.”

Chief SI Rundle said he was supportive of the panel’s findings, adding the department’s investigation into the case demonstrate the force’s commitment to robustly dealing with misconduct. “Thankfully, the majority of our officers and act with integrity and work tirelessly to serve the public,” he said.

Stolen dog recovered by Surrey Police after 8 years

8 November 2024



After eight long years, a gorgeous Cocker Spaniel called Daisy, who was stolen from her home in Mole Valley back in 2016, has now been reunited with her owners.

Daisy, who was one at the time, was stolen along with three other dogs in November 2016, after thieves took the working gun dogs from the garden kennels they were housed in.

Tragically one of the dogs was killed after being hit by a car as it tried to escape and the other two stolen dogs have never been located, despite best efforts from officers.

In a surreal turn of events, and nearly eight years to the day since Daisy was taken, officers were alerted on Tuesday 29 October, that someone had tried to update her microchip details. Our rural crime officer PC Laura Rowley immediately contacted the microchip company to obtain the details of the new owners.

Just two days later officers from the Mole Valley Safer Neighbourhood team completed a three hour round trip to bring Daisy back to Surrey and her owners. They said, "Daisy had been rehomed in good faith by the new owners and they were unaware of the theft of Daisy.

"We brought Daisy, who is now slightly deaf, back to the Mole Valley Safer Neighbourhood Team Office and there was not a dry eye in the house when she was reunited with her owners. She recognised them immediately and stuck to them like glue!"

Sadly, the other dogs, Tilly a black working Cocker Spaniel, and Storm a patchy white Patterdale Terrier, remain missing and are believed to be elderly or have possibly passed away due to their age at the time of the theft. However, if you have any information that may be relevant, please contact us quoting PR/45160097926.

Pictured with Daisy are PC Ewan Keen and PC Ellen Francis.

Surrey Cop demoted for racist texts

8 November 2024



A Surrey Police sergeant who shared racist texts and a video of a man attempting to take his own life has been stripped of his rank - but will continue on active front line duties.

Daniel Hebborn admitted to sending a series of Whatsapp messages to friends in 2019 and 2020 which included a video which showed a man attempting to take his own life by jumping from a high rise building. The video showed the male with "devastating injuries" on the floor, a police misconduct panel heard.

During the two-day police misconduct hearing this September, the former sergeant accepted the messages were inappropriate, breached of the standards of authority, respect and courtesy. The panel said his behaviour had the "obvious potential to cause serious harm to the reputational standing of the Surrey Police and national policing in general and undermine public confidence".

The messages also included an image deemed an "inappropriate racist joke" showing a photo of an elderly black man with

his arm around the shoulders of an elderly white man with the accompanying title 'is this a mugging?'. In a separate message, the officer was asked whether he "beat a guy like you did when you arrested him for littering" to which the officer responded "he was white".

He also shared an image of an empty articulated lorry trailer with the heading "Trailer for sale, serious offers only, sleeps 39 people", followed by "Guess my favourite restaurant will be short staffed again too".

Hebborn continued to serve as a sergeant with Surrey Police in the years between sending the racist messages and the conduct hearing.

The report read: "There was some concern that the 'banter' contained in the WhatsApp messages may have extended beyond the private group and into his position as a sergeant and role model to those in his team or station. based on comments made in his own submitted character references including; "Dan's sense of humour is best described as pushing boundaries that are deliberately controversial but always intended as a joke".

The panel determined that the multiple breaches of the Standards as admitted, amounted to gross misconduct and were arguably so serious as to justify dismissal. However Hebborn avoided being sacked and was instead given a final warning and reduced to the rank of constable.

The report reads: "A clear message had to be given that where an officer behaved in a way demonstrated by the conduct in this case, such conduct was not tolerated within the police service. There was a strong need to build and maintain public trust in the police."

The report added that action had to be taken in order to maintain public confidence and respect especially when it came to the police "tackling issues of racism within their forces."

Head of professional standards, Chief Superintendent Andy Rundle, said; "Surrey Police expects a high level of professionalism from our officers and staff and we will take action when these standards are not met.

"The hearing heard that former PS Dan Hebborn had admitted to the offensive and inappropriate messages and shown significant remorse for his actions. Due to their historic, non-work-related nature, as well as his previous record of service, on this occasion the panel has determined that reducing his rank to PC is an appropriate course of action.

"This decision carries a financial impact as well as potentially impacting any transfer request and future career development. Surrey Police is committed to being an anti-racist organisation, where all forms of discrimination are entirely unacceptable. We place immense value on serving and protecting all our communities with fairness and respect as well as ensuring those who work within our Force enjoy a sense of belonging and respect from their colleagues.

"Earlier this year, we shared our anti-racism statement across the organisation. Our expectation is that all officers, staff, and volunteers uphold the commitments outlined in this statement to challenge injustice and uphold anti-racist principles. We are developing training to deliver to officers and staff that will support the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to ensure respect for all in the service we deliver. In September, we began a series of training sessions that all leaders are required to attend which include a focus on race equality and guidance on how to ensure an inclusive team environment."

Surrey Police ethics print on wall at Mount Browne HQ. (Credit: Emily Dalton/LDRS)

More or less Surrey Police challenge to Commissioner

8 November 2024



Staffing cuts at Surrey Police could be in the pipeline as the force attempts to fill a potential £23.4 million financial hole.

Surrey Police has to make the savings in the next four years and both government-agreed pay increases for police officers and staff and inflation have added to the difficult financial position.

Recognising the financial pressures on forces, the government has awarded a special grant of £175m in 2024/25 to fund the 4.75% officer pay award. Out of money set aside to cover the pay increases, Surrey has been awarded just £2.1m to cover the costs.

As Surrey gets a smaller slice of government funding, calculated by a formula, there is less money to go around. The police allocation formula (PAF) is worked out through various data sources, including population density and the relative need for policing in areas. The nature of the formula grant system means the annual money allocated to Surrey covers just 45% of the total budget whereas other areas such as Northumbria get 80%.

In a Police and Crime Panel meeting on September 26, Surrey Police's Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Kelvin Menon, said "it is too early to say" exactly the savings that will need to be made and where.

The CFO said it is likely the government's funding will only cover pay increases for Surrey's police officers so the force will have to bridge the £2.4m gap to cover the costs of police staff itself. Police staff may be cut as the force has to keep a base number of 2,253 police officers in place.

Speaking after the meeting, Cllr Richard Wilson (Bagshot and North Windlesham/ Liberal Democrat) said: "Due to the government's penalty regime in place to ensure officer numbers are maintained, any reduction can only come from police staff. This means the people helping front-line officers in investigations and forensics."

The CFO told the panel that work was also being done into making savings by changing shift patterns, reducing overtime and forensics, looking at the benefits of upgrading administrative and data systems, potentially reducing vehicle numbers and a detailed budget review by area.

Modelling different scenarios, the CFO said Surrey Police might have to make up to £27.6m gap as a worst-case scenario, or £21.5m on an optimistic basis. Mr Menon added: "The Chief and the PCC are both committed to try and minimise any impact on residents."

If the savings cannot be reduced by the time the budget is set in February 2025, the CFO said Surrey Police will have to use some of its reserves.

Uncertain future for officer numbers

In a national drive to increase police officers, the previous government set Surrey Police an 'uplift' target of 2,253 officers and awarded £48k for every officer recruited above the baseline. Although the force recruited an additional 22 officers it now remains uncertain whether the £48k bonus will be received every year, accounting for the extra officers.

Surrey's Police and Crime Commissioner, Lisa Townsend, said: "If [the bonus] ceases to be the case then officer numbers will have to be reduced." She added the reduction would happen through "natural wastage", meaning officers leaving the force for a new job or change in career.

Surrey currently loses an average of 17 officers a month, creating overall a 10% vacancy in the force.

A gloomy atmosphere took over the meeting as the PCC repeated there was a lot of "uncertainty" in the new government's policy going forward so the force is unable to forecast officer numbers beyond 24/25. She said that constables have been told not to expect any more funding.

Cllr Wilson criticised Mrs Townsend during the meeting, stating the PCC ballot paper for her re-election had the description. More police, safer streets'. He asked: "Shouldn't voters take that as a commitment that the number of officers is going to increase?"

Mrs Townsend said the number of officers has increased and is still increasing, and argued it was for the Chief Constable to decide where officers and staff are best deployed. She added: Both the Chief Constable and I have both made commitments to ensure that we have more officers out and about on the streets."

Epsom murders advance police responses

8 November 2024



Surrey Police say its response to coercive and controlling behaviour in domestic abuse cases is "significantly more advanced" following the Epsom College murders.

Emma Pattison, 45, was found dead alongside her seven-year-old daughter, Lettie, in the grounds of the Surrey school in February 2023. Mrs Pattison's husband, George Pattison, 39, is believed to have shot them at their home before killing himself.

During the hearing, the court learned that Mr Pattison called the police over an alleged assault against Mrs Pattison in 2016. Mr Pattison's shotgun certificate was removed temporarily while the matter was being investigated.

Surrey Police said the case was investigated "thoroughly" at the time but the alleged assault was not progressed due to lack of evidence. The force said there was no reason not to return Mr Pattison's certificate and a renewal application in December 2016, and again in 2022, was granted.

But Chief Superintendent Clive Davies said: "Look[ing] through the lens of what ultimately happened, the incident in 2016 was clearly part of Mr Pattison's controlling behaviour". Although Mrs Pattison never made any allegations of domestic abuse or coercive controlling behaviour against her husband, Ch Supt Davies said the force's "understanding and response to CCB is significantly more advanced now".

He added Surrey Police officers and staff are trained to recognise the signs of CCB, the homicide timeline and high-risk factors. Coercive control uses manipulation, intimidation and various forms of emotional and psychological abuse to gain power and control over their partner.

Ch Supt Clive Davies said: “The tragic deaths of Emma and Lettie draw attention to the need to dispel and challenge myths and stereotypes around who may or may not be victims of domestic abuse, and who indeed may be capable of causing such harm.” He added that if these misconceptions are not tackled “many victims will feel unable to reach out, and will continue to suffer in silence, while those causing harm in relationships are able to exist unchecked”.

After a direct plea from Emma Pattison’s family during the hearing, Coroner Richard Travers also raised concerns that controlling and coercive behaviour should be considered in gun licensing. Surrey Police said it has reviewed the concerns raised in the Prevention of Future Death report published by the coroner including medical records in firearms licensing and CCB.

Ch Supt Davies said: “Domestic abuse in its many forms, whether coercive, controlling, physical, sexual, financial or emotional, must not be tolerated and we will do everything we can to support those who are being abused and ensure that those perpetrating it are brought to justice.”

The response builds from Ch Supt Davies’ statement to the hearing where he pleaded to “challenge stereotypes around victims of domestic abuse”. He highlighted children can also be victims of domestic abuse in their own right, and urged the public to help make sure they are seen, heard and supported.

He added: “I would urge anyone who believes they, or a friend or family member, may be experiencing abuse to report it. We know sometimes the signs that someone is suffering from domestic abuse can be subtle and difficult to spot. However, if you have any concerns at all for yourself, or a loved one, please contact the Surrey domestic abuse helpline which can provide access to independent advice and support in confidence.”

Contact Surrey domestic abuse helpline by calling 01483 776822 or visiting <https://www.healthysurrey.org.uk/domestic-abuse/help>

For anyone who feels they may be exhibiting harmful behaviour in their relationships, please contact the Surrey Steps to Change Hub via email: Enquiries@surreystepstochange.com or telephone 01483 900 905.

Related reports:

Surrey Police help end abuse victim’s ordeal

Surrey joining up to tackle violence against women

No sex please, we’re British police

8 November 2024



Two ex-Surrey Police officers have been banned from the profession for gross misconduct after engaging in sexual activity on various occasions at police stations whilst on duty.

One former officer was found to have given oral sex to her tutor police officer whilst on duty at Horley Police Station. PC B admitted to performing the sex act on her tutor, PC C, and allegedly told another officer she gave oral sex on a sergeant’s desk at Caterham Police Station. Mr C has continued to deny the allegations.

Epsom and Ewell Times has withheld the names of the former officers involved as we take the view that the newsworthiness in the report is the handling of these matters by our local police force.

The police misconduct hearing panel, held on July 25, found Ms B and Mr C “neglected their duties for their own gratification”. The pair breached professional standards by engaging in sexually inappropriate behaviour whilst on duty.

Evidence was heard from another police officer who said Ms B had admitted to her that she and former PC C had engaged in sexual activity on a number of occasions at Caterham and Horley Police Stations. One officer said she saw former PC’s B and C “getting up off the floor and laughing” after interrupting them “in a darkened room” at Caterham Police Station.

Report documents state the pair were alleged to be “kissing and cuddling” whilst on duty at Horley Police Station, a

quieter station, on January 15, 2023. A police officer and former colleague said that he saw Mr C coming out of a dark room with his “outer layer tee-shirt untucked” and not wearing any police protective equipment such as body armour and belt kit. The officer walked past the room which former PC C had left and saw Ms B facing away from him, appearing to be tying up her hair.

Concerned with what he saw, the officer reported it to an inspector who checked in with Ms B’s welfare after her shift. Ms B stated that former PC C had not behaved inappropriately to her and denied anything of a sexual nature happened between them.

But Ms B allegedly admitted to an officer she was in a relationship with former PC C. Mr C’s wife also provided a statement to the panel, in which she said in April 2023, her husband confirmed that “he had an affair with a trainee officer at work”.

In lying to a senior officer about her relationship with Mr C, the panel found the former PC B clearly breached the “most serious” standard of honesty in police professional behaviour.

Making matters worse, the panel considered that both former officers “deliberately” went to the “quieter” Horley station to carry out their sexual activities. Their sexual conduct was “repeated and sustained” over a period of time and in secret because “the officers knew it was wrong”, according to the report.

Members considered that former PC C was especially deserving of blame as he was former PC B’s tutor constable, meaning he had leadership responsibilities for mentoring her. The panel claimed he “failed” to act as a role model to Ms B.

Ms B was also criticised as she “failed to raise concern” about the alleged relationship when reportedly given an opportunity to do so by an inspector and instead lied to her. “No real remorse” was shown by either party and it was noted that Ms B refused to hand over her personal phone in full cooperation with the investigation.

The panel agreed the former officer’s behaviour amounted to gross misconduct and it would undermine trust and confidence in policing if the public had been aware. They found the pair “neglected” their duties and responsibilities whilst on duty at a police station, and “discredited” the force.

Both officers resigned from the force in July 2023 while the investigation was still ongoing. The panel concluded the former officers’ behaviour amounted to gross misconduct worthy of dismissal.

Head of Professional Standards, Superintendent Andy Rundle, said; “Surrey Police expects a high level of professionalism from our officers and staff. The misconduct process for those who do not meet those standards is stringent and we will take all action within our power to ensure that those who do meet these standards are dealt with robustly.

“The hearing found that if former PCs B and C had not already resigned, they would have been dismissed without notice. Both former officers’ details will also now be placed on the College of Policing barred list indefinitely.”

Surrey Police ethics print on wall at Mount Browne HQ. (Credit: Emily Dalton/LDRS)

Surrey police to move to Epsom and Ewell constituency

8 November 2024



Surrey Police purchased the featured premises in Cleeve Road, Leatherhead, in 2019 for over £20 million. The address is just over 5 miles from Epsom High Street and is in the recently expanded Epsom and Ewell Constituency. Will the intended move reported below improve policing in our area?

Surrey Police’s plan to move 400 officers from Reigate to Leatherhead has triggered calls for guarantees on response times and street presence from the area’s MP.

People must not be made to suffer longer police response times or fewer officers on the streets over the police’s decision to permanently move its eastern headquarters from Reigate to Leatherhead, the East Surrey MP has said.

Surrey Police vacated Reigate Police Station last year and shared offices with Surrey Fire and Rescue after dangerous aerated concrete, known as RAAC - which can collapse without warning - was found throughout the base.

It has now taken the decision to permanently move out of the borough with up to 400 officers and staff moving across -

although a long-term site within Reigate and Banstead for its Safer Neighbourhood Team is still being sought.

It says the move demonstrates the force's commitment to retaining an operational base in the heart east Surrey and will allow it to maintain a visible presence in the communities it serves, fight crime and protect people.

East Surrey MP Claire Coutinho has written to the force demanding assurances it can deliver on those promises.

She said: "While the RAAC issue at Reigate Police Station must be resolved, residents in the east of the county will want assurances that a move to Leatherhead will not cause longer response times or less police presence on the streets.

"I have written to Surrey Police to get these assurances for residents and I will be discussing what this means for our area when I meet local officers in the coming weeks."

Surrey Police had to leave Reigate Police Station permanently after RAAC was found throughout the building, and in October 2023 it moved staff into Wray Park, Reigate, on a temporary basis with Surrey Fire and Rescue.

From there it began its search for a long-term solution including the demolition and rebuild of Reigate Police Station.

Surrey Police said the decision to refurbish its Leatherhead site, bought in 2018, was "based on operational requirements, partnerships with other public services, best value for the residents of Surrey, and long-term viability for the Force itself."

The former Electrical Research Association and Cobham Industries site in Leatherhead was bought when Surrey Police had planned to sell off its Mount Browne headquarters in Guildford and relocate its main HQ across the county.

Instead the force decided to close its central Guildford police station, refurbish Mount Browne, and offload the Leatherhead industrial site but the enforced closure of Reigate Police Station has meant a rethink about its East Surrey division and the new plan hatched.

This recommendation was approved on August 6 at the Estates Strategy Board.

Tim De Meyer, Surrey Police's chief constable, said, "The desired move to Leatherhead shows our commitment to retain an operational base in the heart of the East of Surrey where we can maintain a visible policing presence in the communities we serve, to fight crime and protect people.

"This is an opportunity to build a new divisional headquarters which will be operationally fit for purpose and serve the east of our county for many years to come."

Surrey's Police and Crime Commissioner, Lisa Townsend, said, "This is exciting news and if we get planning approval gives us a unique opportunity to build a bespoke divisional HQ that is fit for purpose for our hard-working police teams on the east of the county.

"The situation with RAAC at Reigate Police Station has presented us with some difficult and unexpected challenges and I would like to pay tribute to all those officers, staff and volunteers for their patience and understanding over the last year.

"I am well aware of the importance Surrey residents place on local policing, and I want to reassure people living in Reigate and Banstead that the neighbourhood presence in their communities will not be affected by these plans.

"There have been some tough choices to make but I believe that Leatherhead presents us with the best option in providing both value for money for Surrey residents and an eastern HQ that is fit for a modern police force."

Councillor Paul Kennedy, Mole Valley District Council's cabinet member for internal services and security, said: "While any proposals remain subject to planning permission, this potentially signals yet another boost to the town, alongside the progress of our Transform Leatherhead initiative.

With the addition of an HQ and around 400 members of staff comes the promise of a boost in footfall into the town centre and a positive impact on the local economy."

Surrey Police said it is still committed to having a presence in every borough and district and that there will be a minimum of one front counter facility in each.

They added that, while locations will be reviewed, there will be no reductions than we currently provided, and no reduction in service.

Image: Premises bought by Surrey Police in 2019 for £20,485,000. Google street view.

Surrey Police's response to national disorder

8 November 2024



Following the tragic events in Southport last week and the subsequent violent disorder we have seen across the country, we are providing our communities with an update on our policing approach.

While at this stage, in Surrey, we have not seen the levels of disorder, protests, or reports of hate crime that have been seen across other parts of the country, this has understandably caused concerns within our communities.

Since we first saw the increase in violent disorder across the country and where specific communities have been targeted, local officers have increased their visibility and engagement where we know that residents, businesses, and faith leaders are feeling vulnerable. Patrols have been increased in key areas across the county so that our communities have a visible presence from us. We recognise that this is a challenging time for all our communities, and we are committed to providing reassurances to those who may be concerned for their safety.

We are already seeing an increase in reports of misinformation and disinformation, which we know can be extremely concerning for our communities. Our officers have a vital role to play in reassuring those who feel concerned, vulnerable or unsafe in our county, and the spreading of this misinformation and disinformation can cause further alarm. We would encourage the public to not only challenge what they read online and consider whether it could be misinformation, but also not to share this further on social media.

If you do see information circulating online about possible disorder, please report these to us so that we can investigate and respond. You can also approach local officers when they are in the area to raise any concerns or ask any questions that you may have. If you would prefer to report information anonymously, you can contact independent charity Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111. In an emergency, always dial 999.

We are continually reviewing the information we receive around reports of potential disorder or crime. Our policing response will always work alongside our priority of ensuring our communities feel safe and supported by us.

Chief Superintendent Graham Barnett said: "We would like to reassure all our communities that we are prepared should there be disorder in Surrey. We have specialist teams and resources in place to make sure we can continue to protect our communities while we respond to reports of disorder. We will continue to facilitate peaceful protest, but violent disorder will not be tolerated, and we will respond to this robustly. Arrests will be made, and charges will be brought to those responsible.

"I would like to thank our communities for their continued support as we work together to protect the public, provide reassurances around our policing approach, and robustly tackle any disorder we may see in our county."

Image: TheEssexTech Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Epsom Town as a Safe Place to Live? Is it our future or our past?

8 November 2024



Epsom and Ewell Times is putting the spotlight on crime and anti-social behaviour blighting residents and businesses in the centre of the town of Epsom. In a series of reports over the coming weeks journalist and local Town Ward resident Romana Sustar will bring facts, opinions and responses from those effected and those responsible for solving the problems.

Epsom, a market town in Surrey, England, is often celebrated for its charming high street, historical significance, and the famous Epsom Downs Racecourse but it would appear that a combination of reduced police presence, a lack of resources, and a far too tolerant attitude to anti-social behaviour has resulted in a perceived decline in the safety of residents at night in Town Ward.

Is the image above our past or our future? No one is certain, so all we can say for sure, is that for the residents of the Town Ward, this is our present. The picture was taken on 28 July 2024, the scales are for drugs, the alcohol is brought for purpose, not sold from any local club or bar, and the graffiti is more than a week old and unchallenged.

What the picture does not show, is that everyone in authority has been aware of the rat infestation and general filth for some time, and that they are specifically aware of this illegal activity after hours in this location, but are yet to engage with residents or respond to the increased criminality in any meaningful way.

To be clear the photo is genuine, entirely unstaged and fails to show the true extent of the decline in standards and the acceptance of criminality and anti-social behaviour within 300 metres in all directions. And so it is genuinely perplexing

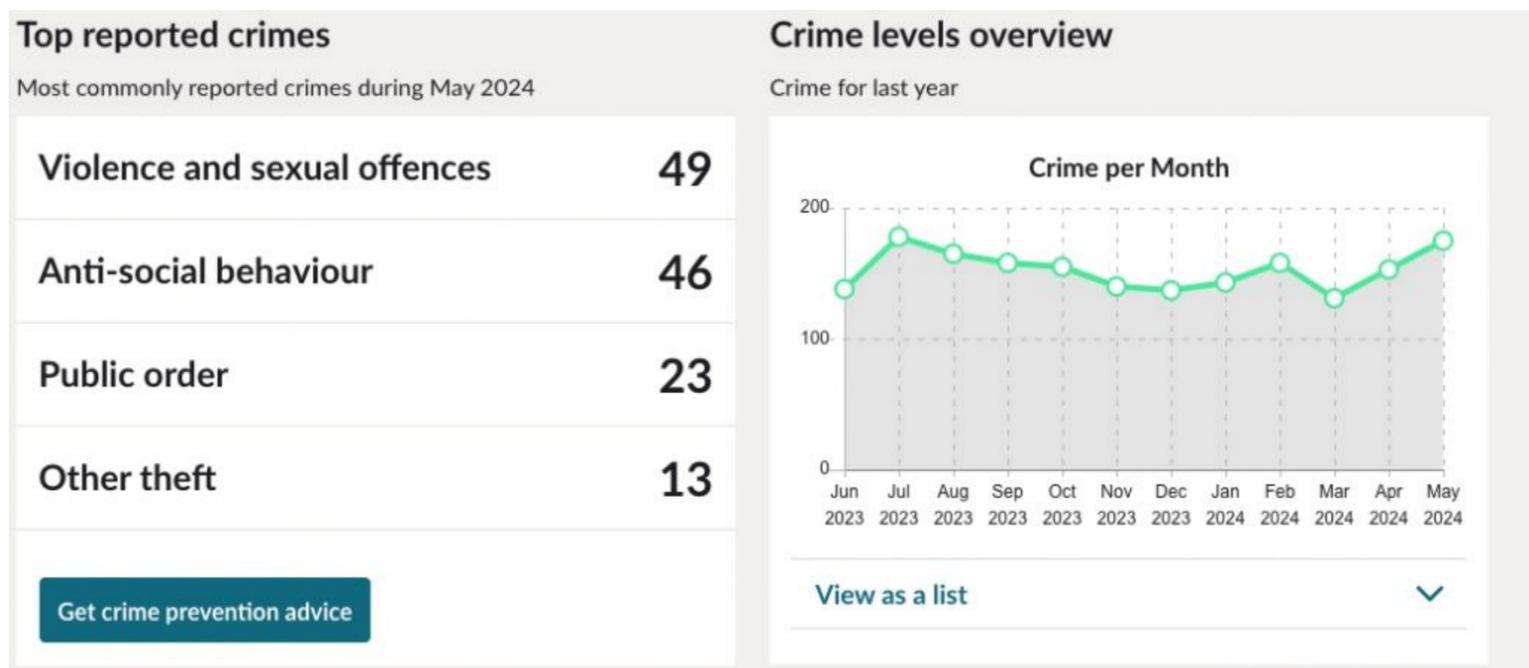
why our community fails to confront activities such as those shown, when it is apparent that they are bad for the community, bad for business, bad for residents and indeed bad for the drug users, as the spike in knife crime proves.

That being said, let's also be careful when we talk of failures, let's not talk in space or point any fingers. When communities fail they fail together and they live with the consequences together.

So let's start with an open mind and state that for now all we know is that the drug dealers, criminals, thugs and the lazy litterers are to blame. Today let's just simply ask ourselves why we put up with it, why we let it happen and what we can do to reverse the trend.

In April 2016 after the sale of the local police station Inspector Elkins said "If anything, the public will see more police presence with more officers patrolling the area." (Craig Richard Surrey Comet) but we are yet to find a single Town Ward resident who actually believes this is true, so let's also be careful with our own statements.

We really don't know what role such comments, the lack of local charging and detaining facilities, and the general cuts to the police have actually played in damaging the reputation of the local Police. What we do know is criminals feel confident enough to have drug parties in open areas in Town Ward, and gangs in the same area will carry knives then chase down and stab their enemies without a care.



What we need is data so perhaps the reported crime figures will give an insight. Here they are for May 2024, which is well before the Friday 21 June 2024 multiple stabbing that the straight line rise to May was obviously heralding. And who has not seen open and likely unreported shoplifting recently?

It does look fair that residents who live centrally might be questioning what has gone wrong, what has changed and what can be done to restore order?

"I have lived in this block for 18 odd years and have seen and felt a rapid decline in general of this once vibrant, friendly and safe area of the town." (long time Epsom Town resident).

Finger pointing and headline grabbing clickbait articles will ultimately achieve nothing, but resentment and distraction from the real issues, so what can we actually do to assist change?

In a series of articles, we will investigate the true position in 2024 and will ask the questions others appear too frightened, or too disconnected to ask. We will report the real statistics and engage with any and all local initiatives in order to advise residents how to access accurate information, and how to engage the elected and taxpayer funded bodies that exist to ensure the common good.

We will focus on the area from the end of Station Approach on West Street to the end of Upper High St including Derby Square and once we have the June figures we will move to focus on any efforts residents and local business owners are undertaking, to improve their environment, rid themselves of pests, and reclaim their common areas from the drugs and crime that seems to have moved in.

Whilst Epsom is not New York, the problems it faces today would appear to be similar to those of 1980s New York, with graffiti, fly-tipping, vermin, and a general disregard for law and enforcement, which then leads to open drug dealing and finally street violence. As the Mayor of New York at the time said: "Obviously murder and graffiti are two vastly different crimes. But they are part of the same continuum, and a climate that tolerates one is more likely to tolerate the other."

So the real question becomes can local residents and businesses introduce practical, appropriate and effective solutions to enable and assist our local politicians and enforcement officers in carrying out their duties to us, or is our future already mortgaged to decline, filth and ever increasing criminality and anti-social behaviour?

See letter about the nuisance of delivery mopeds in the Town Centre.

Footage of Epsom College murders aftermath not for idle police viewing

8 November 2024



An ex-serving Surrey Police officer has been banned from the profession for gross misconduct after viewing body-worn camera footage of a “significant local and national case” without a legitimate reason.

The Local Democracy Reporting Service understands that the footage was of the moment the headteacher of Epsom College was found dead. Surrey Police have not confirmed which specific footage was viewed, however the date of the footage aligns with the date that officers were called to Epsom College.

Emma Pattison, 45, was found dead alongside her seven-year-old Lettie, in the grounds of the Surrey school, on 5 February 2023. Mrs Pattison’s husband, George Pattison, is believed to have shot them at their home before killing himself.

The former Surrey Police cop, Mr Baseer Ahmed, admitted he watched the body-worn video (BWV) footage of the serious incident on 5 February, but denies he did so without a policing purpose.

The police misconduct hearing panel, held July 1, found Mr Ahmed breached professional standards as he unnecessarily watched footage of the police attending the scene, where the victims were found.

Professional standards state that there must be an express policing purpose to access body-worn camera footage, to ensure it is not accessed unnecessarily.

Mr Ahmed watched some- not all- of the footage on February 7, days after the major incident was reported, and picked up by newspapers. He was not given specific instructions to look at the footage nor carry out any enquiries, according to the misconduct report.

A Staff Officer for Chief Superintendent Budd since 2022, Mr Ahmed’s role included accessing additional information for his Chief Superintendent. Working in West Surrey, the panel noted it was not in this instance appropriate for Mr Ahmed to find out information from other divisions.

The panel found Mr Ahmed did not appear to be watching the video as part of a genuine work activity. For example, he made no notes, did not attempt to discover the location of the incident or tell any senior colleagues about it.

Although admitting he watched part of the video footage, Mr Ahmed has continually denied not having a justifiable policing purpose for accessing the footage. He also denies a breach of the standards and that his conduct amounts to gross misconduct.

The panel was not satisfied and Mr Ahmed was found to have breached standards of professional behaviour, confidentiality, orders and instructions. The report reads: “It is important to remember the high standards that members of the public rightly expect Police Officers to adhere to, the extremely difficult circumstances being faced by family members in this particular case and the likely effect that unnecessary viewing of the footage would have on them.”

The panel agreed this amounted to gross misconduct and it would harm the public’s view of the police service for watching footage of a major incident without legitimate purpose. This was aggravated by Mr Ahmed acting contrary to national guidance, without any specific instructions and continuing asserting he had valid policing reasons to access the footage.

Mr Ahmed resigned from Surrey Police on December 15, 2023 - 10 months from the incident- with his last day being January 15 this year. If he was still a serving officer, the panel said he would have been dismissed to maintain public confidence in and to uphold high standards in policing

Whilst Mr Ahmed attended the two Pre-hearings, he did not attend the misconduct hearing due to ‘personal reasons’ he cited in an email.

Head of Professional Standards, Superintendent Andy Rundle said: “The public rightly expect that police officers behave at all times with integrity and respect.

“Ex-officer Ahmed breached this trust when he looked at body worn footage of a crime scene, despite having no policing purpose. This behaviour is not acceptable, and a thorough professional standards investigation was launched.”

A full inquest into the deaths of George, Emma and Lettie Pattison is due to take place later this month on July 30.

Surrey police said they are not officially confirming what body worn footage Mr Ahmed viewed due to “other ongoing judicial processes” that have not yet been concluded. The full inquests into the deaths are expected to take place on July 30. Surrey Police confirmed it is the Epsom College incident “off the record”.

Image - Epsom College: Naveed Barakzai/Maxal Photography. Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.5 Generic license

Sick “jokes” end trainee PC’s career

8 November 2024



A **Surrey** trainee police officer, who ‘joked’ he would rape a domestic abuse victim, has been sacked from Surrey Police.

PC **Samuel Wilton**, a trainee officer since 2023, admitted gross misconduct at an accelerated hearing on June 26.

Fellow officers reported PC Wilton ‘joking’ that “if she [a woman] was a domestic violence victim I would still rape her” on a night out in Five and Lime Bar in Guildford on January 5.

Comments made by the trainee officer included: “If they were single, I would break her in half”. He also said: “If there was a Domestic Violence (DV) victim who was fit, I would rape her” then adding: “If the DV victim was fit and dead, I would still rape her”.

The training group, for which PC Wilton was part, had received training about professional behaviour and standards expected in the police force on the very same day that he made the comments.

PC Wilton was then placed on restricted duties. Still in police training, PC Wilton was never on front line duties.

Allegations against PC Wilton were proven in the hearing, and he was found to have breached the Standards of Professional Behaviour amounting to gross misconduct. “I am absolutely disgusted with myself,” PC Wilton said during the hearing, as he told inspectors about his life-long ambition to be in the force. He added: “I will never forgive myself of a lifetime of focus for a moment of madness.”

PC Wilton assured the hearing that he has “grown as a person”, reflecting ‘daily’ on his comments. PC Wilton also said he has taken reading courses he has taken on sex and gender equality to educate himself.

“I am more than this incident and this mistake,” PC Wilton told the hearing as he asked for a second chance. He added: “In my naivety and thoughtlessness, I have contributed to the [misogynistic and abusive culture] that the police try to eradicate.”

However Peter Gardner, Assistant Chief Constable for Surrey, concluded: “For the public interest you should cease public duty immediately.” He stressed that, although the incident amounted to gross misconduct, there is no evidence or allegation that PC Wilton is a threat to the public.

The hearing heard that, drunkenness was “no defence” for his behaviour, as agreed by both investigation officers and PC Wilton, who said he never intended to offend anyone.

The misconduct hearing noted the trainee officer does not regularly drink to excess and so ‘could not have foreseen’ his conduct.

The panel concluded that the incident could damage the police’s reputation and make the public think less of the police.

Recent high-profile incidents such as Hampshire police officers sending discriminatory whatsapp messages were highlighted as part of a perceived ‘culture of misogyny’ within the police. Investigating officers said they wanted to send a very clear message of “there is no place for you in the police service” if misconduct is found.

The misconduct hearing concluded that “anything less than a dismissal would not achieve the purpose of misconduct proceedings” and “fail to maintain public confidence and the police’s reputation”.

Acknowledging PC Wilton’s regret, lifetime ambition to be in the force and commitment to the civic duty, Assistant Chief Constable said in his closing remarks: “Please don’t let this determine the rest of your life”.

Numerous character references were given to the hearing from PC Wilton’s former colleagues, mostly female, including those from his time in the RAF. One female colleague said the comments were “completely out of character” for PC Wilton, with others praising his ‘teamwork’, ‘professionalism’ and ‘emotional intelligence’.

Deputy Chief Constable Nev Kemp said in a statement to the press after the meeting: “The comments made by PC Wilton are deeply offensive and disgraceful for any police officer to make, whether on or off duty and simply cannot be condoned.

“I am pleased that his colleagues reported his behaviour without delay. This demonstrates that this standard of behaviour is not tolerated in Surrey Police, and I commend them for taking the immediate action that they did.

“Fortunately, PC Wilton has never carried out any frontline duties or come into contact with members of the public as a police officer. His conduct on that night falls far short of the high standards and example expected of our officers and staff

in order to maintain the trust and confidence of our local communities.”

PC Wilton will have five working days to lodge an appeal against his dismissal.

Image: Surrey Police ethics print on wall at Mount Browne HQ. (Credit: Emily Dalton/LDRS)

Bearing the balls of Derby week in Langley Vale

8 November 2024



Residents of **Langley Vale**, an estate adjacent to the renowned Epsom Racecourse, have expressed growing frustration and concern over repeated incidents of anti-social behavior and vandalism coinciding with the annual **Derby week**. The community’s grievances were vividly shared through a series of social media posts, highlighting a range of disturbances and a perceived lack of adequate police response.

One resident described a troubling encounter with three males, one of whom had a cast, yet lamented the police’s apparent indifference. “This is serious now, not just knock down ginger, but they don’t seem to be taking it seriously. They should be going on site and looking for these culprits. The police should be patrolling this whole area of the downs anyway. They know we get trouble every year; a burnt-out car last year on the downs and theft,” the post read.

Another resident voiced their anger over the disruption Derby week brings to the village, accusing the police of failing to ensure community safety. “The whole village gets held hostage this time of year, and the police don’t do enough at all to make the residents feel safe,” they stated.

The most alarming incident reported involved the shattering of bedroom windows by ball bearings, suspected to have been launched with a catapult, between 10-11 PM. Fortunately, the children’s rooms were spared. The attack occurred at the top of Grosvenor Road, near the bridle path. “Reported it to the police, obviously, but if anyone has had similar treatment or saw anything suspicious, can you let me know or report it to 101,” the resident urged.

Further reports of catapult and ball bearing damage surfaced within the village, including a patio door destroyed within a half-hour span. The resident noted the impressive accuracy of the attack, considering their home’s secluded position next to the woods. They identified a pattern, suggesting the culprits were targeting homes from the bridle path at the top of Rosebery, Grosvenor, and Beaconsfield Roads, areas supposedly under police dispersal orders. “Despite these boys being exactly in the same place three evenings and nights running, no police presence was seen at the top of the village,” the post concluded.

As Derby week continues, Langley Vale residents remain on edge, calling for more proactive measures from law enforcement to protect their community from further disturbances.

Inspector **Kelly Clifton-Sinclair**, Borough Commander for Epsom and Ewell, said: “We are aware of reports of anti-social behaviour and criminal damage in the Langley Vale area. We know that these crimes can have a serious effect on the local community, and I would like to reassure residents that we are investigating all possible lines of enquiry so that we can work to identify those responsible. Since the reports were made to us, we have had officers patrolling the local area, proactively speaking to the local community and those affected, to make sure residents feel safe.

“If you are a victim of crime, or have recently been a victim of crime, please report it to us so that we can investigate it thoroughly. Each report helps us to build our understanding of crime in the area so that we can respond, work to deter crime, and help keep our communities safe. If you have any information that might assist our investigation, please get in touch with us via Messenger quoting PR/ 45240061106.”

Surrey’s Police and Crime Commissioner re-elected

8 November 2024



The result of the 2nd May 2024 election for Surrey’s Police and Crime Commissioner was announced Friday and the Conservative Candidate, **Lisa Townsend**, was re-elected despite a substantial drop in turnout.

The re-elected Commissioner vowed to continue supporting a “back to basics” approach to policing in Surrey. She received 95,538 votes in Thursday’s PCC election. **Paul Kennedy** for the Liberal Democrats closed the gap significantly. Trailing by 12% points in 2021 he narrowed Lisa Townsend’s lead to 5% points this time round.

Epsom and Ewell’s own candidates fared honourably with **Kate Chinn** for Labour narrowly ahead of independent **Alex Coley** with 42, 813 and 42,052 votes respectively. Ms Chinn is Borough Councillor for Court Ward and Mr Coley for Ruxley Ward.

The result was announced in Redhill Friday afternoon after votes from across the county were counted.

Ms Townsend, who has served as Commissioner for more than three years since winning in 2021, vowed to continue supporting Surrey Police’s renewed focus on issues that matter most to residents, such as tackling anti-social behaviour, shoplifting, and targeting persistent offenders.

She said the Force now has more officers than ever before, and under the leadership of new Chief Constable Tim De Meyer, they are concentrating on combatting those crimes that matter most to the Surrey public.

Chief Constable **Tim De Meyer** said: “Surrey Police warmly congratulates Lisa Townsend on her re-election as Police and Crime Commissioner. We look forward to continuing to work with her on challenges such as tackling violence against women and girls, improving our response to calls from the public and bringing more offenders to justice.”

Party	Candidate	Votes	%
Conservative	Lisa Townsend	95,538	36.4
Liberal Democrats	Paul Kennedy	82,213	31.3
Labour	Kate Chinn	42,813	16.3
Independent	Alex Coley	42,052	16.0
Turnout		265,682	29.9
Rejected ballots		3,066	
Total votes		262,616	

Turnout was 29.9 per cent, compared to 38.8 per cent in the last Police and Crime Commissioner election in 2021. The total number of verified ballot papers was 265,682 from a total electorate of 888,083.

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[Clash Over Funding and Priorities in Surrey PCC Race](#)

Clash Over Funding and Priorities in Surrey PCC

Race

8 November 2024



On the eve of the Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner election, candidates are locked in a battle of ideas over funding allocations and the strategic direction of law enforcement in the county.

Independent candidate Alex Coley, former barrister Paul Kennedy of the Liberal Democrat Party, and Kate Chinn representing the Labour Party have all weighed in on the key issues facing Surrey's police force and incumbent Commissioner Lisa Townsend for the Conservative Party responds.

Alex Coley, (Residents Association Councillor on Epsom and Ewell Borough Council for Ruxley Ward) a vocal critic of current spending practices, has campaigned on the issue of financial management within the force. "Over the past six weeks Surrey has been my treadmill, six weeks of walking and talking to residents all over this county," Mr Coley stated. He emphasized concerns raised by residents about the allocation of resources, particularly in light of a significant underspend by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) office. "The number one question from residents has been: 'how are you going to pay for more police?'" Coley highlighted, pointing to unutilized funds that he argues should be directed towards bolstering the police force.

Furthermore, Mr Coley raised eyebrows with his critique of what he termed "casino politics in policing," alluding to financial dealings between the PCC and Surrey County Council. "I don't think residents want a PCC acting like an investment bank that dabbles in the gilt markets, backed by your council tax," he asserted, painting a picture of fiscal irresponsibility that he vows to rectify if elected. Full statement [HERE](#).

In contrast, **Paul Kennedy** of the Liberal Democrat Party takes a different approach, drawing on his legal and financial background to advocate for prudent fiscal management. "The challenge of funding more community policing requires professional discipline, not simplistic solutions," Kennedy remarked. With experience as a barrister and an accountant, Kennedy positioned himself as a candidate with the expertise necessary to navigate the complex financial landscape of law enforcement.

Mr Kennedy defended the current funding structure of Surrey Police, stressing the importance of maintaining a buffer to address cash flow fluctuations. "Temporary surpluses can't just be run down as some have suggested," he cautioned, echoing sentiments of fiscal conservatism that have resonated with some voters. Full statement [HERE](#).

Meanwhile, **Kate Chinn** (Epsom and Ewell Borough Councillor for Court Ward) of the Labour Party emphasized the human aspect of policing, focusing on recruitment and retention as key priorities. "Of course the budget needs scrutiny and increasing, but as Alex Coley identifies it is ensuring enough officers are recruited and retained that is the real priority," Ms Chinn argued. She outlined a series of measures aimed at bolstering recruitment and supporting existing officers, including streamlining the recruitment process and providing adequate mental health resources.

Ms Chinn's vision for policing centred on valuing and supporting front-line officers, with a pledge to advocate for fair pay and long-term investment in law enforcement. "A Labour government would ensure police pay recognizes the value of the work our officers do and commit to long-term investment," she asserted, positioning herself as a champion of the men and women who serve on the front-lines of policing. Full statement [HERE](#).

As the candidates make their final pitches to voters, the future direction of policing in Surrey hangs in the balance. With each candidate offering a distinct vision for the role of the Police and Crime Commissioner, residents face a critical decision that will shape the county's law enforcement priorities for years to come.

A response from Conservative candidate and current Police and Crime Commissioner, **Lisa Townsend**, was awaited at the time of going to press and just came in minutes after.....

Lisa Townsend refutes Mr Coley's claims: "There is no loan to Surrey County Council. The £43m is the amount of cash held at the 31/8/23. This represents reserves of about £30m as well as cash held due to the timing of council tax receipts, grants, payments out, etc. Rather than holding all our cash in a single bank we pool it on an overnight basis with SCC who add it to their spare cash and invest it in overnight money market deposits with many banks. This reduces the risk as this pooled money is spread over a larger number of institutions than if we were to do this alone, and it also reduces the cost of management."

In respect of underspending the Commissioner points out the small underspend in proportion to the total budget and how it arose from a higher staff vacancy rate than expected. Full statement [HERE](#).



Full eve of poll statements of PCC candidates

8 November 2024

Alex Coley - Independent

Over the past six weeks Surrey has been my treadmill, six weeks of walking and talking to residents all over this county. The number one question from residents has been: “how are you going to pay for more police?”

One resident, a retired police officer, was about to put my leaflet in the recycling bin when he asked me that very question. I told him that the Surrey Police & Crime Commissioner is loaning £43m to Surrey County Council. I told him the PCC underspent by £8.7m last year and is on course to underspend £3m this year, because of vacancies and projects falling behind. The leaflet did not go in the bin. That retired officer was horrified to hear how much money is available but not being used. I want to put that money to work, it’s the reason I am standing for Police & Crime Commissioner.

I don’t think residents want a PCC acting like an investment bank that dabbles in the gilt markets, backed by your council tax. Do you really want casino politics in policing? Surrey County Council has £0.6bn of debt which it expects to increase by a further £1.2bn. Let’s just hope they don’t go bust like so many councils have and take tens of millions of pounds of police funding down with them. It’s public money, your money, that you pay for your police service, which is desperately stretched. I want to use that money for policing, but I need to get elected first.

Is it any wonder a third of police officers have left since April 2020 and a fifth say they want to leave. Surrey Police has an establishment figure of 2,263 police officers, with 1,000 of them new recruits. This means almost half of our police officers are probationers looking for leadership. Let’s not gamble with their future.

The PCC boasts of bringing in £10m of funding to Surrey Police. Last year the Audit & Governance Committee at Surrey County Council showed a movement of £10m from Surrey Police into SCC’s treasury management.

In response to a written question from me the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner advised: At the Surrey Police triennial review for civil staff pensions, as at 31st March 2022 the actuary determined historic deficits to be:

2023/24 - £1.612m

2024/25 - £1.671m

2025/26 - £1.733m

The actuary also determined that paying off this historic pension deficit would benefit from a discount amounting to £224k, equivalent to 7 new police officers.

Kate Chinn - Labour

Of course the budget needs scrutiny and increasing but as Alex Coley identifies it is ensuring enough officers are recruited and retained that is the real priority. Only then can the money be spent so projects and initiatives are delivered. If Surrey Police can’t do that it doesn’t matter how much money there is in the pot.

I would increase police recruitment by: simplifying the recruitment process, providing more resources for vetting and putting support in place so keen candidates who fail can reapply and succeed.

I would ensure retention by, providing adequate supervision and mentoring for officers. Ensure resources were in place to protect their mental well-being and mental health professionals are available to support officers to process any traumatic events they encounter in the challenging role of policing. All staff must be supported in their career development and enabled to develop pathways into specialist areas with the training needed to succeed. Senior staff must have incentives to encourage retention,

For a government to retain dedicated hard working officers, motivate new recruits and slow the increasing falls in officer it must value policing with actions not words.

A Labour government would ensure police pay recognises the value of the work our officers do and commit to long term investment. They would value the police for the work they do everyday to protect our communities’.

If elected I would be a Labour PCC in a Labour government giving Surrey police the respect they deserve.

Paul Kennedy Liberal Democrat

The challenge of funding more community policing requires professional discipline, not simplistic solutions. As a former barrister, I’m best placed to address the criminal and public law challenges of the PCC role. And to boost Surrey Police’s performance and morale, after 10 years overseeing public interest bodies.

I’m also a former accountant and actuary. I’ve chaired my local council’s audit committee; and for 3 years I’ve served on Surrey police and crime panel’s finance committee which scrutinises the PCC’s budget.

Surrey Police’s budget is £310m a year, mostly salaries and services but also capital projects. Funding is primarily Government grants and charging Surrey residents the highest Council Tax in the country, plus income from lending officers to the Met and renting out police cells to the prison service.

As a small organisation facing cashflow fluctuations, it makes sense for Surrey Police to share Surrey County Council’s larger banking and treasury management arrangements. Temporary surpluses can’t just be run down as some have suggested. Prudent treasury management principles require every organisation to hold a buffer to meet monthly

expenditure requirements plus a contingency, and Surrey Police is no exception.

Lisa Townsend - Conservative and current Surrey PCC

Since I was elected as Police and Crime Commissioner in 2021, Surrey now has more police officers than ever before, and it has been great to hear from residents across the county that this is making a difference in our communities.

I believe the £43million figure comes from Cllr Coley’s misunderstanding of how the Police receive council tax each year – the extra £13million represents surplus cash due to the timing of council tax receipts at the time of the Budget meeting in February.

There is no loan to Surrey County Council. The £43m is the amount of cash held at the 31/8/23. This represents reserves of about £30m as well as cash held due to the timing of council tax receipts, grants, payments out, etc. Rather than holding all our cash in a single bank we pool it on an overnight basis with SCC who add it to their spare cash and invest it in overnight money market deposits with many banks. This reduces the risk as this pooled money is spread over a larger number of institutions than if we were to do this alone, and it also reduces the cost of management.

With regard to underspend, Surrey Police is a large organisation with a budget of over £300million and more than four thousand employees. When the Chief Constable and his finance team set the budget, they make every effort to consider as many possible scenarios and circumstances as possible, including how many officers and staff are expected to leave or join. These forecasts are, understandably, not always entirely accurate and for the year 2022/23 a higher than expected staff vacancy rate contributed to a large underspend. For the year 2023/24 the Force underspend is projected to be around £1million. Cllr Coley sat on Surrey’s Police and Crime Panel for almost a year and was present at the latest budget meeting so is aware of these figures and the reasons behind them.

When it comes to reserves, it is prudent practice for most organisations to hold some money in reserve to deal with unexpected costs or emergencies. Major incidents and investigations such as the Covid-19 pandemic, a period of prolonged protest, cyber attack or a terrorist attack would require large amounts of money to be spent quickly, without a guarantee that these costs will be paid back by the Government. The latest financial information from Surrey Police shows that the reserves are currently predicted to be £30.3m. Given the annual budget for 2024/25 is nearly £310m – this represents around 10% or the equivalent of about 5 weeks budget.

This is less than the average for police forces nationally, which stands at 13%, and significantly lower than our neighbouring forces and Borough and District Councils in Surrey who typically hold up to 150% of their annual budget in reserve. I’m not entirely comfortable having a lower reserve than other forces but I have to balance the demand on taxpayers with the money available for use in an emergency and I believe that 10% is fair given the other pressures. As we have seen in Surrey and beyond in recent years, over-spending and imprudent management of finances and reserves is the fastest way to become a failing council and I will do all I can to ensure that Surrey Police are not put in this position.

Whilst it sounds lovely to spend this reserve amount on additional officers, this would only be possible once. Of course, once reserves are spent, they are gone forever, meaning not only could these officers not continue to be funded, but Surrey Police would also be in a difficult position if any crisis or challenge occurred.

Police post taken down before election

8 November 2024



The Surrey Police and Crime Commission social media team were made to remove a graphic from Twitter, now X and Facebook after a complaint it could influence the May 2 elections.

The post was made during the run up to the election when public bodies are supposed to remain completely impartial to avoid favouring any one candidate or using taxpayer money to look to influence voters.

The message said it had re-opened funding for local services that promote community safety, support children and young people and help reduce reoffending in Surrey. It was accompanied by an image that showed more than £2m had been provided to support local services in the last financial year.

The complainant, the Liberal Democrat Councillor for Bagshot and North Windlesham Richard Wilson, felt this was a breach of pre-election publicity rules.

Writing to the Monitoring Officer, he said: “Any reasonable person would conclude that the post, in particular its use of the graphics, is likely to improve the electorate’s opinion of the incumbent PCC (Police and Crime Commissioner). This constitutes a breach of the guidance and, therefore, of the rules laid out in the Acts.

“It would be possible to direct readers to the funding website without publicising the £2m which has already been

provided. This piece of information is wholly unnecessary and its purpose is clearly to promote the PCC. This is a use of public resources to influence an election.”

After receiving the complaint, Alison Bolton, chief executive and monitoring officer of the Police and Crime Commission, told the communication team to delete the images but felt the text was fine to be republished – and did not merit an apology.

Media policies had been reviewed ahead of the pre-election period and the use of social media and their website has been “significantly” limited, she added.

The posts were scheduled, she said, as the funding process opened on April 1 and they wanted to give organisations the greatest amount of time possible to apply. She said: “Your view that the posts are “likely to improve the electorate’s opinion of the incumbent PCC” is arguably a subjective one. I can assure you that the posts were made in good faith by comms colleagues with the intention of promoting a funding opportunity and not, as you suggest, to “promote the PCC. “We had purposefully not made reference to the incumbent PCC or included any images of her.

“That said, I recognise that the aim of promoting the funds could have been achieved with a simpler post and as such, I have asked my colleagues to remove the posts that include the ‘graphic’. We will re-issue the link, but I don’t believe that issuing an apology is necessary.”

A spokesperson for the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner said it restricted its output to some “business-as-usual work” in line with pre-election guidelines.

They said: “On April 3, the Communications Team posted a message on social media highlighting the process for which organisations and services can apply to our funding streams which opened for the new financial year two days earlier on April 1.

“These streams provide vital support for some of the most vulnerable people in our communities including victims of crime, young people and domestic abuse survivors as well as funding important projects that enhance community safety across Surrey.

“Allocating these funds and commissioning these important services is a significant role that the OPCC undertakes and we wanted to give local organisations the greatest amount of time possible to apply. The message posted did not name or reference the current PCC or contain any image of her. However the message did have an accompanying graphic which highlighted the amount of funding the office had provided to support local services during the last financial year.

“The post was created in good faith with the intention of promoting the funding opportunity and was not designed to promote the current Commissioner. However upon review by the OPCC Monitoring Officer, the decision was taken to remove the graphic and replace it with one that had removed the reference to the amount of funding given last year to avoid any inference during the pre-election period.

“The current commissioner was not aware and did not have any involvement in the creation of the original message.”

The elections for the Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner take place countywide on Thursday May 2. Counting takes place the following day with the results expected around 2pm.

The vote takes place across Surrey with the count taking place the following day with the result expected to be announced between 3pm and 4pm.

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