

## “On Your Bike” to Surrey’s PCSOs?

11 February 2023



A Surrey County Councillor has criticised the reduction in the number of Police Community Support Officers in recent years. PCSOs are non-warranted but provided with a variety of police powers and the power of a constable in various instances by the forty-three territorial police forces in England and Wales and the British Transport. Surrey Police employ about 2,153 warranted officers.

Analysis of new Home Office statistics commissioned by the Liberal Democrats from the House of Commons Library has shown the drastic cuts to PCSOs in Surrey. They claim a total of 88 full-time equivalent PCSOs were employed in Surrey as of September 2022. This is in stark contrast to the 123 that were employed in March 2015 - meaning there have been 35 PCSOs cut from Surrey Police in that time.

Cllr Will Forster (Woking South) stated: “These shocking figures prove that Conservative Ministers are yet again failing to prevent crime in Surrey. They should be ashamed. Police Community Support Officers play a vital role in keeping our communities safe. The Government should be empowering them to do their job, not slashing their numbers into oblivion. Liberal Democrats are calling for a return to proper community policing, where officers are visible, trusted and known personally to local people. We will build communities where people are safe - and feel safe, too.”

Epsom and Ewell Times asked Surrey Police for their take on the figures and a spokesperson said: “In 2022, to contribute to savings across the force, we reduced the number of Police Community Support Officers in Surrey Police to 96, 22 posts fewer than our previous staffing level of 118 full-time equivalent PCSOs. This reduction did not involve redundancies and achieving this staffing level did not result in a reduction in overall numbers in our Safer Neighbourhood Teams; we maintain a strong blended mix of police officers and PCSOs in these key frontline posts.

In September 2022, Surrey Police employed 88 PCSOs. This is lower than our desired number of PCSOs, so it is inaccurate to say that 35 PCSO roles have been cut by the Force. We are actively recruiting to bring our establishment level back up to 96.

We know how important a visible police team with local knowledge is to residents in each of our boroughs. A trusted, knowledgeable, and proactive local policing presence is just as important to us, and PCSOs are a valued and integral part of that.”

What is your view about visible policing in Epsom and Ewell? Write in to Epsom and Ewell Times.

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