

LEEDS PARISH COUNCIL

REPORT - EASTERN RURAL PARISHES POLICING FORUM HARRIETSHAM VILLAGE HALL, THURSDAY 11TH OCTOBER 2007

The meeting was opened at 7.35pm by Forum Chairman, Cllr Tom Sands of Harrietsham Parish Council. Seventeen Councillors representing Parishes were present.

Also in attendance were Sgt Mick Hayes, Rural Neighbourhood Sergeant, PC Stuart Thomas and a number of Eastern Parishes Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) – apologies had been received from Inspector Sandwell.

Sgt Hayes gave an overview of current Policing issues in the Eastern Rural Area. He stated that the Mid Kent Police Area currently has the lowest crime rate in the County and rural crime remains low.

He stated that the appointment of twelve PCSOs has had a positive impact in Parishes.

Several recent Operations have been conducted and have proved successful. Operation Pilot targeted Licensed Premises in the Rural Areas, and included drugs dogs being put into pubs, etc. The Operation has received positive feedback from Licensees who were pleased with the high visibility presence of Police Officers. The Operation produced one arrest for drugs supply and one for possession of a Class 'A' drug.

Operation Tree, run by PC Kingwell has taken place mainly on the North Downs Area, and is concerned with hare coursing, farm thefts / burglaries and attacks on wildlife. Most farmers in the Area are aware and supportive of the Operation.

Rural, night-time road checks have also been carried out and have proved successful in providing intelligence re: night-time activities and movements and laser gun speed checks have also taken place in the Rural Area resulting in thirty drivers receiving Fixed Penalty Tickets and one being summonsed. Additionally, forty five drivers were warned about their speed. The average age of offenders was approximately forty and included both males and females. Speed initiatives will continue and some Parishes additionally operate Speed Watch.

The issue of over weight vehicles was once again brought up and PCSO White said he was only empowered to report such events and not to issue warnings. However he had been working on several stop and check programs with PC Stuart Thomas at the Castle entrance.

Neighbourhood Profiles are coming along well and will be kept on record so available with information, contacts, etc. for Officers attending incidents in specific areas. Most PCSOs are now holding regular surgeries in their Parishes and are working on setting up PACT (Police And Communities Together).

Each PCSO gave a report for their Parish PCSO White now attends the monthly Parish Meetings and provides details of reported crimes as well as information and updates on current issues. PCSOs are being encouraged to provide regular reports for Parish magazines and publications

Several Councillors reported on behalf of their Parishes, that their PCSOs have been very well received and are already recognised as providing an efficient service and doing good work, especially with regard to PACT. Sgt Hayes stated that he was very pleased at this response as initially there had been a lot of opposition to PCSOs and claims of their appointments being 'Policing on the cheap'.

With Bonfire Night almost upon us once more, Cllr Fitzpatrick queried times, etc. that fireworks were able to be let off. It was advised that it is not permissible to let off fireworks between the hours of 11.0pm and 7.0am other than on 5th November when there is an extension of one hour, to midnight. Sgt Hayes also advised that it is illegal for any person under the age of 18 to purchase fireworks or to be in possession of an adult firework in a public place.

Cllr Sands thanked everyone for attending and declared the meeting closed at 9.0pm.