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Police and Crime Commissioner outlines ambitions

BY Katie Mansfield

ESSEX'S Police and Crime Commissioner says he will not be setting the police force specific targets but wants to see all crime reduced across the county in the next 12 months.



PCC Nick Alston (pictured right) was speaking at a public meeting at Basildon Council discussing crime and policing issues in Basildon.

The packed meeting saw local MPs John Baron and Stephen Metcalfe, Basildon Council Chief Executive Bala Mahendran, Chief Inspector Glen Pavelin and District Commander Nick Morris join members of the public to discuss crime in the area.

Mr Alston is due to present his Police and Crime Plan on 21 February and revealed he will not be setting the police specific targets but has in fact asked Chief Constable Jim Barker McCardle to lower every type of crime in the county.

He said: "All crimes are as important. Specific targeting does not necessarily lead to good policing as officers become focused on targets rather than fighting crime."

The meeting heard burglary is on the increase in the borough with 32 more offences taking place between 1 April and 31 December 2012 than the same period in 2011.

Both Chief Inspector Glen Pavelin and Mr Alston were keen to stress this increase is significantly lower than then rest of the county.

The meeting also touched on drug dealing and the Council's Community Safety Action Zone's as part of the Community Safety Partnership were praised for their work. The meeting heard there is a strong proactive police action against organised crime in Basildon and a recent successful operation saw 49 people charged with drug related offences.

Robin Brennan from Essex Probation Service was also keen to reassure residents about the situation at controversial former bail hostel, Felmores, stating when terms of probation are breached, offenders are recalled to jail within two hours.

Cllr Malcolm Buckley, cabinet member for regeneration said: "I'm very reassured in general terms the premises are secure and do look after offenders in a proper manner. The Council is currently of the view that the current location for the hostel is inappropriate. We have set up the review to find a new location."

In terms of public engagement Mr Alston admitted common sense had to be used.

Mr Alston told the *Enquirer*: "People expect a proportionate response to the crime and I think sometimes officers forget how intimidating it can be for a member of the public to speak to an officer. Particularly if it is the first time. We do tell officers to be aware of that and if that is the only time they deal with somebody they have to make sure they deal with it correctly. A certain amount of common sense and discretion is required."

Mr Alston added he wants to see less officer movement between forces in the next 12 months and that education is vital to stopping young people turn to a life of crime. He added: "I want the public to have confidence in the police force, crime down, fall in victims and I'm optimistic about the public warming to the PCC compared to the election turnout last year."

Stephen Metcalfe, MP for South Basildon and East Thurrock said: "This was a fantastic opportunity to get some answers to some of the tough questions about local crime and policing. PCC's are a vital means through which we can now hold the police to account and I look forward to seeing how Nick's plans will help to cut crime in the future."

Residents can read Mr Alston's Draft Police and Crime Plan at: http://www.essex.pcc.police.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/20130129PlanConsultationV_v2-02F.pdf.

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