



Rowington Crime Meeting hears facts and receives answers...

by [Fraser Pithie](#)

A PUBLIC MEETING called by District Councillor Sue Gallagher to discuss concern over crime levels in the Rowington, Lawsonford & Lapworth areas and attended by over 150 residents took place at Rowington Village Hall at 2.30pm on Friday 8 February 2019.

The meeting was primarily a question and answer session for residents. Fraser Pithie independently chaired the meeting with a panel that comprised of **Chief Inspector David Kettle** from Warwickshire Police, **Rt Hon Jeremy Wright QC MP** and **Philip Seccombe**, Warwickshire Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC).

The police's Warwick Rural West Safer Neighbourhood Team comprising of Beat Manager **PC Ross Kirby**, Police Community Support Officers **Marie Gisbourne-Hanks** and **Paul Coleman** were in attendance. In addition one of the PCC's Rural Crime officers **Emily Naysmith** and **Paul Ledden** from Warwickshire County Community Safety Team were also present.

Background

Ch Insp Kettle was asked to set the scene and share some initial thoughts with the meeting. He responded by outlining the demand on the police. In summary Ch Insp Kettle said:

The police are no different to many other public sector agencies with difficulties around funding and finance. That's offset with increases in police demand and the changing nature of what the police deal with.

The internet brings new challenges, serious organised crime groups and how they offend are affecting burglary patterns.

Work on missing people, newer areas such as child sexual exploitation, county line drugs supply and modern day slavery are phrases we would not have recognised five years ago and these demonstrate how demand and crime is changing.

Ch Insp Kettle went on to provide a snapshot of Warwickshire Police had dealt with countywide in the last 48 hours, he said the force had:

- Taken 830 calls, of which 185 calls were graded as needing an immediate response (blue lights)
- Recorded 200 crimes
- Arrested 31 people
- There had been several notable incidents including:
 - A serious sexual assault
 - Three police officers assaulted while affecting an arrest
 - A male badly beaten in public house
 - A car key burglary
 - A female and child found that have entered the UK illegally
 - Armed robbery with a shotgun and knife
 - Fatal road traffic accident involving a motocyclist
 - Knifepoint robbery
 - Eleven people reported missing requiring investigation and search
 - Actively been looking for six individuals to arrest in relation to domestic violence
 - Managing an unauthorised encampment of travellers

Question & Answer Summary

The following is a summary of the questions asked by residents together with a summary of the answers/responses.

Advance Question from Mr Wiseman

In reference to the most recent report by Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary that indicated that Warwickshire Police was critical of its effectiveness which was categorised as requiring improvement. HMIC also commented that Forces' performance had declined since the previous year. (This report was written before the collaboration between Warwickshire and West Mercia Police had ceased due to West Mercia pulling out.)

Given that the Warwickshire Police force is the smallest in England & Wales and this causes concern with standalone central costs and overheads. If the Warwickshire force was merged with a force from an adjacent region it would free up substantial resources these could then be redeployed to increase the number of front line officers that are so desperately needed in areas like Arden Ward, which has by some measures, some of the highest crime rates in the country and where residents never see a police officer on routine patrol.

What steps are available to the general public to secure consideration of a proposal that Warwickshire Police should be integrated into a larger adjacent force?

Rt Hon Jeremy Wright QC MP

The statutory position is that there is nothing in law that prevents Warwickshire Police force being amalgamated with another police force. What is prohibited in law would be dividing Warwickshire between different police forces.

I would caution against assuming that a merger with a larger police force would answer our problems. My reasoning for such caution is that the largest and nearest adjacent police force is the West Midlands which covers Wolverhampton, Birmingham, the Black Country and Coventry. If Warwickshire were to be merged with West Midlands it would be a very small minority of the whole area covered by such a large force which would be dominated by urban policing requirements.

However, I think there is every reason that the adjacent forces could and should increase collaboration on things like serious organised crime and there is plenty of scope to build on that. However, I would be reluctant to advocate a merger because I feel there would be a very real chance that Warwickshire could end up being a very junior partner in a predominantly urban area where I do not think that the priorities of rural communities and rural crime would be uppermost in the minds of those making the decisions.

Phillip Secombe - Police & Crime Commissioner

I would like to add that the we had no prior notice from West Mercia that they intended to cease with the Strategic Alliance. However, we have moved on and there are options for Warwickshire Police which we are currently considering. These are, standalone (Warks Police does everything itself) although this is possible I don't think it's wise because it would come with significant financial challenges certainly in the short term. The second option is to consider sharing some services with West Mercia and we are also talking to other surrounding forces on the same basis.

My view is that we will change by combining a number of these options. My focus is a police service that is more responsive to the residents of Warwickshire, more focused on the crime and responding to residents and communities in Warwickshire.

What are the numbers of the police now and what were they 10 years ago?

Philip Seccombe

The maximum number of police officers that Warwickshire have had was in 2008 was 1025 officers, at the moment there are 800 officers. The precept that I have agreed will enable us to recruit around another 200 officers. By March 2020 our aim is to get to 976 officers.

Rural crime and its increase in this area is of concern and we want to know what the police are doing to tackle rural crime?

Ch Insp Kettle

The more serious crimes are looked at on a daily basis, we have a problem-solving meeting once a month which plots out where all of the crimes are happening across the south of the county which focuses on rural crime. Police resources are then targeted based on the daily and monthly analysis.

Phillip Seccombe

I have asked the Chief Constable to focus more on rural crime and consequently he has agreed to set up a Rural Crime Team which will focus much more on criminal activity in rural areas. I also believe that everyone also has to do more for themselves, I am funding three Rural Crime Advisors and they are there to help and support you with practical advice that can you help protect your home and property. I also commend the Neighbourhood Watch.

We had three break-ins in a week but we never heard anymore or got any feedback, why?

Ch Insp Kettle

This is an area that we realise needs improvement , we need to get better at communicating outcomes and news. I'd encourage people to connect to Neighbourhood Watch and for the police we will do our best to improve feedback.

Is more money going into the police?

Jeremy Wright

Yes, there is more going in. We have to realistic about this, despite whatever the money spent there will never be enough police officers to have one along every street. As part of a national increase in police funding from Central Government there will be £812.5m going in. As a result Warwickshire will receive a £7.4m increase in police spending for 2019/20.

We believe that B94 & B95 postcode areas are crime hot spots and there was a significant rise if crime at the latter end of last year (2018)

Ch Insp Kettle

We are very aware of the rise in crime locally late last year and we have and continue to be doing a considerable amount of work around that. Some arrests have already been made and persons have been charged and remanded in custody. This work is ongoing and therefore I cannot say anything further at this stage.

Philip Seccombe

I realise the threat that cross border crime represents and I can confirm that the four West Midlands forces, of which Warwickshire is one, have been working together on a regional basis to take

measures to improve the ability to detect criminals, particularly travelling criminals. This work is being built on further.

How many regular police patrols are about the Rowington/Lapworth area?

Ch Insp Kettle

The Safer Neighbourhood Team for the Warwick Rural West area patrol the area on a regular basis. In addition the 24/7 response teams, roads policing units and also crime investigation are also patrolling the area. Some of these personnel will not be marked cars because of their work but nevertheless it does mean that when they are in the area there is a police presence.

I'd also add that things have changed burglaries and theft are these days seldom committed by a one man band. The type of events we have witnessed relate to serious organised crime by groups/gangs largely from urban areas who have shown themselves not be afraid of the police. This is one of the reasons that whilst we are increasing our activity to detect these criminals and bring them to justice householders also need to consider what measures they can take that would help deter theft and burglary.

Can you tell us what are the most effective home security things that residents can do to help protect themselves?

Ch Insp Kettle

Yes, one of the areas where householders can make a difference and lessen the chance of easy entry into their home is to make sure that they have 'anti snap locks' fitted to their doors. There have been several instances locally where these have defeated criminals trying to get into a property. (See video demonstration and details of where and how you can obtain anti snap locks below)

Emily Naysmith – Rural Crime Advisor

Another measure that is really effective in preventing the theft of motor vehicles, including most sought after or high value motor vehicles is the fitting of a robust steering immobiliser. Criminals are thwarted by these because of the time, noise and potential damage they would have to make to remove the immobiliser before being able to steal the vehicle. (Details of Steering Immobiliser given below)

Jeremy Wright

We have to do better at deterring crime in this area by demonstrating to criminals that if they visit the area there is a high chance of being caught. We also need to deter crime by doing more ourselves.

Fraser Pithie

There are a good number of reports that come in by phone to Warwickshire Police from residents around the Rowington, Shrewley, Lawsonford and Lapworth area. The information is welcome and on several occasions has provided good intelligence as the details have linked to vehicles or persons that the police are interested in. Local residents should not underestimate the contribution they make by providing this information. Warwickshire Police and Neighbourhood Watch would encourage everyone to keep a keen eye out and report anything that looks suspicious or out of place.

Can you tell us about using technology like Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR)

Ch Insp Kettle

It is open to any community to privately fund an ANPR system. However, the relevance and use of ANPR is limited in its effectiveness as far as the police are concerned. The deployment of ANPR is also subject to the "Royston Ruling" which refers to the Information Commissioner determining that you cannot cover every route into and out of a community because of privacy and human rights considerations. That said the police are using mobile CCTV and ANPR technology and coverage by this does include parts of the Warwick Rural West area.

The meeting closed at 4pm.