

CHESHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

QUESTIONS TO THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER – SEPTEMBER 2023

- (1) The thoughts of the Police and Crime Panel are with everyone affected by the crimes committed by Lucy Letby. The Panel places on record its appreciation for the extremely professional way in which the Cheshire Constabulary undertook what must have been a very complex and harrowing investigation.

Back in March 2021, I asked the previous Commissioner a question related to the cost implications of Operation Hummingbird, the investigation into unexplained deaths and alleged assaults on babies at the Countess of Chester Hospital. In response, the Commissioner noted that as it was then a live investigation, his direct involvement was understandably extremely limited, but he informed the Panel that he had supported an application to the Home Office for additional funding, this had been successful, with £952,00 being awarded.

It has been widely reported in the media over recent days that the investigation is continuing, and that this could potentially result in a second trial. Given the duration of the case, the high level of staff committed to it both now and in the future, can the Commissioner give the Panel an overall appraisal of the costs incurred thus far, and those projected, if there were a second trial? Could the Commissioner tell the Panel if any further financial support has been forthcoming from the Home Office, and whether any support is likely in the future for this protracted investigation?

Evan Morris

- (2) Given the harrowing and disturbing nature of the crimes committed by Lucy Letby, can the commissioner outline what support has and will be available for the investigating officers to support their well-being?

Yasmin Somani

- (3) Recently I was asked by Councillors for the Appleton Ward in Wides to arrange a meeting with the Chief Inspector at Widnes, I was also asked to attend this meeting. In many respects the meeting was very successful, and a number of issues were discussed and sorted by the Inspector. However, during this meeting, the subject of issuing fines to members of the public for illegally parking their cars on double yellow lines and in dangerous locations was not resolved.

I have asked this question to the Police Commissioner before; why are parking tickets not issued by PCSO's? I was told that it is not a Police matter and other authorities in Cheshire have their own Enforcement Officers employed to do this service. Halton Borough Council are in a three-year Transformation Programme at the moment and are discussing employing our own Enforcement Officers, but the licence to issue fines takes a year to complete, so in the meantime, illegal parking in areas of Halton is not policed. Please could I have the Commissioner's comments on this issue and how it can be addressed.

Cllr Martha Lloyd Jones

- (4) A member of the public has expressed concern to the Panel that work by volunteers on local Speedwatch initiatives can go unrecognised, with no action being taken by the Constabulary to enforce speed limits when serious issues are identified. Could the Commissioner clarify his policy on the operation of Speedwatch initiatives across Cheshire, including the role played by volunteers. Could he also explain how locations are selected by the Police?

Evan Morris

- (5) The Metropolitan Police have announced (13 August 2023) that they will no longer respond to emergency events relating to mental health. Can the Commissioner explain the approach being adopted in Cheshire, and if changes are being considered, what consultation is taking place with partner organisations. Should any changes be introduced, could the Commissioner explain how a 999 emergency call handler, or Police Officer on the street in Cheshire, will triage such incidents in order to make a safe assessment to determine the most appropriate and timely intervention or response?

Evan Morris

- (6) In October 2023 an acoustic camera was installed on the A34 Pendleton Way in Wilmslow in an attempt to crack down on anti-social motorists creating a nuisance through noise. The initial 3-month trial period saw 239 activations but no fines as no Public Space Protection Order was in place to be able to enforce these. Another 3 month extension on the trial period was granted. Please can the Commissioner give an update on what happened in this 3 month extension period and what is the status of the camera now, will it be used to fine motorists? And will this trial be rolled out to other areas of Cheshire?

Gemma Shepherd – Etechells

- (7) Previously the Commissioner has updated the Panel on the Hollyguard app and associated campaign, I believe Cheshire Constabulary have 28k licences for the app for young people to take up, given the recent publicity and marketing of the app by the Commissioner's office, can he update us on the number of licences which have been issued, the response to the app and any next steps to further push out its use.

Yasmin Somani