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Weekly newsletter from Warwickshire's PCC

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## Police and Crime Commissioner Warwickshire

Friday 11th December 2015

### Building a safer Warwickshire



#### Welcome to my weekly newsletter

I'm Ron Ball, Warwickshire's Police and Crime Commissioner, and welcome to my weekly newsletter.

Here you will find out the latest news, what I've been up to during the week and how I am working to keep Warwickshire residents safe and supporting new projects and initiatives to tackle crime in the area. You can get in touch on 01926 413718 or email [opcc@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:opcc@warwickshire.gov.uk)

## Thought of the week: Home Secretary outlines reforms

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This week Home Secretary Theresa May held a ‘Police Reform Summit’ at the Home Office, where she outlined her vision for policing over the next four years following the Comprehensive Spending Review. In her inimitable style she told the assembled audience of Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners that the Chancellor’s unexpected decision to protect overall spending on the police does not amount to a reprieve from making further savings or “letting us off the hook” from introducing further major reforms.

“We must redouble our efforts, force a more urgent pace, and deliver a more radical and more sustained period of police reform than we saw even in the last parliament,” she said. “Because with protected funding comes an even greater responsibility to spend every penny of taxpayers’ money wisely, and to drive better value at every step.”

While last minute issues meant I was unable to attend in person as planned, I didn’t have to hear Mrs May’s speech in person to know that the work of police reform is not yet complete – or indeed to be told of the continued need to find efficiency savings. This has already been at the forefront of my thinking for some time and the StraDA programme (Strengthening and Deepening the Alliance) with West Mercia is very much geared towards this. Indeed, I imagine the Alliance itself is just the sort of innovative thinking that the Home Secretary would want other forces to pursue.

Elsewhere in her speech, the Home Secretary outlined that some specialist units, such as firearms, financial crime and cybercrime, could be transferred to regional units or the National Crime Agency. While I have always been an advocate of localism, there are certain parts of policing that could benefit from a national approach, both in terms of finding new efficiencies and from the perspective of being more operationally effective. We've seen how this is possible with the National Police Air Service, which as many of you know I am a board member of. The Home Secretary made it clear that such changes would not be imposed from the centre but rather it was up to forces to design the best way forward, regionally and nationally. I'm sure there will be plenty of debate on just this topic in the coming months.

One thing I would quibble slightly with the Home Secretary on is the notion that the Chancellor has fully protected overall police spending – this is only true if PCCs opt to increase the police precept (the smaller proportion of your council tax that is raised locally to pay for policing) by the maximum amount of 1.99%. Even then, there is no 'new' money available, so the investments in collaboration and armed policing will be top-sliced from the central policing fund, meaning there may well be less allocated to individual forces – we will find out more details on this later this month.

Mrs May criticised PCCs who have continued to “complain about budget cuts” – I'm certainly not one of them, however I do feel it is fair to point out factually what the position is, rather than relying on the simpler headlines that the Chancellor's statement has generated. There will still be the need to find savings locally, though thankfully they are not anything like the order of magnitude that had been predicted and we had originally planned for. Nevertheless, that planning will still be essential for the changes that will still need to be driven through.

That's why I've suggested increasing the precept by 1.99 percent – but I want to hear your views before taking my final proposal to the Police and Crime Panel in February. You can find more details on how to take part in the consultation later in this newsletter.



**Ron Ball**  
**Police and Crime Commissioner for Warwickshire**

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**Police and local authorities need more powers to tackle travellers**



Pointing out some of the rubbish left by Travellers with PC Stuart Baker.

On Monday I visited Rugby Free Primary School to see for myself the aftermath left by a group of travellers who had set up camp illegally on the pavement opposite.

Mounds of rubbish and, most disgustingly, human waste were spread across the area, including the footpath used by parents and children as they head towards the school. The travellers moved on of their own volition after a few days on this occasion - leaving behind a costly clear up and no doubt the fear that they could return again in the future.

Quite frankly, this is unacceptable, particularly since it has been an issue which has occurred multiple times since the school first opened in September. In the 12 months up to July police received 355 reports of unauthorised or trespass by Gypsies and Travellers in the north of the county alone (North Warwickshire, Nuneaton and Bedworth and Rugby). In a number of cases, travellers have proved equally as disruptive to residents and other sensitive sites as they have in Rugby.

The difficulty faced by police and local authorities in tackling these issues are two-fold; currently there is a shortage of pitches across the county onto which such travellers can be moved - either permanently or temporarily - and the existing powers of the police and local authorities have limitations and often take too long to secure.

Proposals to increase the number of emergency stopping places were discussed this

week by Warwickshire County Council, but of course our local authorities often have a hard time persuading local communities that such sites should be located in their midst; perhaps understandably the behaviour of a minority of travellers such as those at Rugby tends to dominate people's thinking.

While the police have powers to tackle unauthorised encampments in certain circumstances, they have no powers to move them on when they are set up on the public highway (as was the case at the Free School), unless there is an alternative site to move them to or they are causing an obstruction to the highway, at which point they can only be summonsed to court.

Local authorities have responsibility for obtaining court orders to move on encampments on the public highway and on public land if the travellers or Gypsies fail to move on when asked, however in practice the process for obtaining an order from the courts is relatively lengthy; on average it currently takes 21 days.

I'm certainly not anti-traveller; I have been more than happy to step in in the past to help find solutions which are acceptable to both the local community and to travellers and Gypsies, such as the arrangements around Kenilworth Horse Fair.

However, the actions of a particular section of the traveller community, who have no interest in abiding by any rules, causes problems for all of us - including the many travellers who would not dream of behaving in such an intolerable fashion.

Before the last General Election, the then-Justice Secretary Chris Grayling said that the issue of travellers occupying land 'requires attention as soon as we get a Conservative government re-elected'. To date, no new powers have been enacted and I would urge ministers to look at the situation here in Warwickshire to understand how the current limitations in the existing legislation handicap the police and local authorities in dealing swiftly with unauthorised encampments, particularly when they occur at sensitive locations such as schools.

Previous suggestions of the creation special magistrates courts that can order evictions on weekends and during the night would be a significant step forward in speeding up the eviction process, while extending the police powers to perhaps cover encampments on the public highway at sensitive locations would also help.

North Warwickshire MP Craig Tracey raised this issue in Parliament on Tuesday and got an assurance from Policing Minister Mike Penning MP that he would be happy to meet to discuss the situation, although the Minister did state in his answer that he thought police and local authorities did have considerable existing powers. I will continue to press the Government to look at this issue in more detail - the community rightly asks that the police and local authorities deal with these situations effectively. All we are asking for are the right legal tools to do that.

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**Trump's comments are divisive and idiotic**

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Picture courtesy: Saeed Sheikh

From across the other side of the Atlantic comes news of the latest crass utterance from Donald Trump, the tycoon who – rather incredibly – remains the front-runner to win the nomination to be the Republican Party’s presidential candidate at the next US elections. This week he called for a “total and complete shutdown” of Muslims entering the US in the wake of the deadly California shooting “until our country’s representatives can figure out what is going on”.

Quite rightly, his comments have been condemned utterly and from across the political spectrum, with President Barack Obama, Trump’s fellow Republican presidential candidates and even former Vice-President Dick Cheney condemning the idea. Here in the UK the Prime Minister said the comments were “divisive, unhelpful and quite simply wrong” – sentiments I wholeheartedly echo.

Mr Trump went onto make bold (and unsubstantiated) assertions that there were now “no go areas” in Paris and London, where police were too frightened to patrol for fear of Islamic fundamentalist terrorists. It provoked a withering response from the Metropolitan Police who rightly denied this was the case and invited the candidate to come and see for himself how wrong his views were.

I can only refer back to last week’s newsletter and my own observations about the local Muslim community’s outstanding demonstration of patriotism at the recent KESWA Charity event I attended. ‘Proud to be British’ was the overriding theme from all in attendance (as shown by the picture above) and it’s a pity we don’t see similar fervour more widely in this country from all sectors.

Unfortunately, the sorts of headlines Donald Trump’s statements can generate could

lead to other unpleasant but less outlandish statements being seen as more acceptable. We should push back strongly against this and create a community for all. While many people have called for Donald Trump to himself be banned from entry to Britain, ultimately I don't think this is particularly helpful either. Much better to allow the man to speak and then confront him directly with the facts which highlight the idiocy of his standpoint and fatally undermine any argument he might make.

The one piece of consolation I can offer in all of this is the observation by electoral statistics guru Nate Silver, who has a famous track record of correctly predicting US elections. He points out that, while Trump may enjoy around 25 percent support in the candidates' race at the moment, the Republican Party represents only about a quarter of US voters. Extrapolated to the population of the country as a whole, this is equivalent to around six to eight percent of all Americans – or about the same as the number of people who believe the moon landings were faked... I trust our friends across the Pond will let common sense play out in the end.

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### **Oxford Policing Policy Forum**

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Changes don't often happen by accident and that can be said of the decision to introduce Police and Crime Commissioners in 2012. There would be wide agreement that the driving force behind implementing this change was Nick Herbert, MP for Arundel and South Downs, someone who I had never met until Thursday of this week. He was however among the delegates at the 18th Oxford Policing Policy Forum in the wonderful setting of The Old Library of All Souls College.

Chief Constable Martin Jelley and I attended and the theme of this year's forum was 'Where next for Police and Crime Commissioners'. The event was sponsored by Capita and jointly organised by The Police Foundation and Oxford University's Centre for Criminology. The purpose of the forum was to get together senior police officers, PCCs and academics to explore ideas.

I managed to have lunch with Nick, which - given his enthusiasm for the introduction of PCCs - was fascinating. His enthusiasm and drive was evident and it was very interesting to hear his perspective on the political journey which had to be navigated to get PCCs introduced.

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### **Police Precept Consultation 2016/17**

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I want to hear your views as I consider setting the police budget for 2016/17. I'm inviting taxpayers from across the county to tell me if they are willing to contribute around a penny a day extra in order to maintain frontline policing levels.

In November, the Government announced plans in its Comprehensive Spending Review to keep policing budgets at current levels during the life of this Parliament. As has now been made clear by the Home Secretary in a letter to PCCs and Chief Constables, the only way that police funding will remain at the same level will be if the police precept – the small portion of each council tax bill that pays for policing – is raised by the maximum permitted amount of 1.99% each year by every PCC.

Without this, Government resource funding to policing will actually be reduced by 1.3% in real terms over four years. If the current police precept rate was frozen, Warwickshire Police would lose around £700,000 next year and in each subsequent year, resulting in a financial gap of around £2.836 million by 2020. This would have a significant impact on frontline policing and could reverse the recent efforts which have seen the proportion of officers on the frontline increase to 95 percent, which is above the national average.

As a result, I am proposing that the police precept is **raised by 1.99%** next year - equivalent to **31p per month** or **£3.75 per year** on average for a Band D property – less than the price of a coffee and a cake at a leading high street coffee shop.

You can find more detail and give your feedback on this proposal by completing an online survey, which asks the simple question:

***“Are you willing to spend an extra 31p per month for an average Band D property in order to maintain frontline policing levels?”***

If you've not given your views yet, please do take a few moments to take part in the consultation - just click the button below to get started.

**The consultation will close at midday on Monday, 18 January 2016.**



Give your response

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## In the news this week

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Image from Flickr user Curtis Kennington used under a [Creative Commons](#) agreement.

I made several appearances on the radio this week - as well as talking to Touch FM, Free Radio, BBC Coventry & Warwickshire and Heart FM about the travellers issue, I also made a cameo appearance on BBC Radio 2, when I phoned into the Jeremy Vine Show on Wednesday afternoon to give him my views on Donald Trump. You can [listen again](#) to what I said on the BBC iPlayer - I'm on at around the 23 minute mark:

*Some other news stories this week that may be of interest:*

**[Leamington Courier: Police slam unfit claim amid spending success](#)**

**[Nuneaton News: Police make 13 arrests as part of special crime crackdown in Nuneaton](#)**

**[Leamington Observer: Controlled explosion after German bomb found in Warwickshire countryside](#)**

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## Diary look ahead: Monday 14th - Friday 18th December

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*Here are my key diary appointments for the coming week.*

### **Monday 14th December**

1.45pm - Audit committee meeting, Hindlip

### **Tuesday 15th December**

10.00am - Weekly Chief Constable meeting, Leamington

2.00pm - Meeting with Warwickshire Race Equality Partnership, OPCC offices

5.00pm - Attending annual carol service at HMP Onley

### **Wednesday 16th December**

10.00am - PCC/DPCC/CEO meeting, Hindip

2.00pm - Safer Warwickshire Partnership Board, Leek Wootton

### **Thursday 17th December**

9.30am - Budget consultation meeting with North Warwickshire Borough Council, Atherstone

9.30am - Place Partnership meeting, Hindlip

### **Friday 18th December**

9.00am - Budget consultation meeting with Warwick District Council, Leamington

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