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Weekly newsletter from Warwickshire's PCC

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Police and Crime Commissioner Warwickshire

Friday 13th November 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

Thought of the week: Armistice remembrance



Picture by Flickr user Mark Shirley, used under a [Creative Commons](#) agreement.

The fact that I have announced my intention not to stand in next year's election means that there are now some things that I will be doing for the last time as Police and Crime Commissioner. On Tuesday I had the huge privilege to attend the Armistice Day commemorations in Bedworth. As usual, the organisation was immaculate and the weather was good enough for the poppy drop the Dakota aircraft - perfectly timed for 11 o'clock, just as the sun broke through.

The support for the commemoration was extraordinary and it was good to see so many schoolchildren amongst the large crowds. The sacrifices made on all of our behalves must not be forgotten. It would take a heart of stone not to be moved by the ceremony.

It won't surprise you to know that not all of my concerns are police-related. I heard on the news this morning that an Aer Lingus flight attendant is claiming damages for enduring an excessively heavy landing a number of years ago. Could I guarantee that amongst the thousands of landings I made during my flying career that they were all as silky smooth as my memory would like them to have been? I'm following the case with interest...

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ron Ball". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ron Ball
Police and Crime Commissioner for Warwickshire

Come and have your say in Leamington next Tuesday



Next Tuesday evening (November 17th) I'll be holding my next Public Scrutiny Meeting at The Kingsley School in Leamington. As usual, the meeting gives you the chance to hold me to account on issues relating to crime and safety. You'll also be able to quiz Warwickshire Police Chief Constable Martin Jelley on force matters.

The event is open for all members of the public and will begin at 6.30pm with a chance to talk informally with me before the meeting proper begins at 7pm for public questions. We will then move onto other agenda items from 7.30pm. This will include a presentation on the new force strategy for cybercrime.

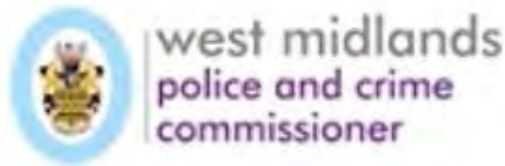
This is a chance for you to come forward and have your say on crime and policing in your community, so please do come along to raise your concerns and air your views.

If you can't make it in person but want to submit a question in advance, I'd welcome them at opcc@warwickshire.gov.uk or via Facebook and Twitter on the links at the foot of this newsletter.

Subject to the Gods of Wi-fi being with us on the night, we'll also be live streaming the event via [Periscope](#) - so watch out for the link from our Twitter feed.

[You can find the agenda and papers for the meeting here.](#)

Legally Qualified Chairs



As part of the process to increase confidence in the police, the Government has decided that when police officers face serious misconduct proceedings, the presumption is that these hearings will be held in public unless there are good reasons not to do so. There will also be a change in the way the meetings are conducted. In future, they will be chaired by a legally-qualified person, rather than a senior police officer.

To put this into practice on a force-by-force basis would have been very inefficient, as each force would have needed to interview and select its own 'pool' of potential legally qualified chairs. To counter this, the four Police and Crime Commissioner Offices across the West Midlands (ourselves, West Mercia, West Midlands and Staffordshire) have decided to share a single pool and we recently advertised for candidates.

A staggering number of people applied for the roles (well over a hundred) and the West Midlands PCC office reduced this to a list of just over 20 very highly qualified candidates. Together with my regional colleagues I have devoted two days recently to the exhausting but satisfying task of interviewing the candidates, with a third and final day of interviews due to take place next week.

When finished, we will have our list of around a dozen people who will go on to chair an average of around 35 misconduct hearings which take place each year across the region. I hope the new style of misconduct hearings will be well-received by the public and provide reassurance of the seriousness with which police misconduct is regarded, investigated and dealt with.

Great offer to help protect your valuables



A person's home and possessions often carry an emotional attachment and when a criminal interferes with this, it can have a long-lasting impact on victims. Warwickshire Police has launched an innovative campaign to help tackle the problem of burglary and other types of acquisitive crime and make life much harder for the criminals.

'We Don't Buy Crime,' takes an innovative approach to reducing and disrupting the market for stolen goods and protecting your home and possessions by making them less attractive to the would-be criminal.

The first part of this campaign involves launching a special offer which allows residents in Warwickshire to buy SmartWater to make their goods with for the reduced price of £25 (RRP £75).

SmartWater is a traceable liquid with a unique code that is brushed onto household valuables. Once applied, the liquid is almost impossible to remove and is only detectable under UV light. The technique allows officers to identify stolen goods once checked under the light. The unique code within the traceable liquid allows officers to link the belongings back to a particular address. If the liquid is found upon a burglar it can also link them back to the scene of their crime.

Local second-hand goods traders and police officers are equipped to detect the presence of SmartWater on property, increasing the likelihood that any stolen property will be reunited with its rightful owner and offenders prosecuted. The force is also providing free SmartWater kits to all victims of burglary to help them avoid falling victim again, while 'We Don't Buy Crime' information packs will also be circulated in the local community.

It's a great scheme which will hopefully act as a deterrent to criminals, assist in the detection of crimes when they do occur and provide reassurance and advice on how to stay safe and secure for residents.

[Find out more about the 'We Don't Buy Crime' campaign and how to order a](#)

SmartWater kit.

Inspection Report



Another week and another inspection report - this time the Criminal Justice Joint Inspection examination of the quality of criminal case files prepared by the police.

All 43 forces were inspected by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) and HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPPI) as part of the national report, with feedback also given to each policing area.

Nationally, HMIC and HMCPPI found that vulnerable victims and witnesses of crime are being let down by an inconsistent approach to the management of criminal case files, finding that overall there was a lack of quality and consistency. Some forces are doing well, while others are not. While the picture has improved since previous inspections, there is clearly some way still go.

In Warwickshire, the picture found by the inspection was more encouraging. In reviewing 10 case files, it found that in seven out of 10, the summary of key evidence - vital for prosecutor's to be able to present cases effectively in court - met required standards and in seven out of nine cases the summary of the interview with the defendant was also adequately presented (one case did not require an interview with the defendant).

The report also found that in the three cases sampled in which the victims were vulnerable, this was correctly identified by officers and the risks were managed throughout the justice system in two of these cases.

Clearly, this was a small sample of files and can only ever provide a snapshot in time. Improving case files is something that the force is continuing to work on and something that I keep an oversight on - clearly, what all forces are striving for is that all case files are prepared in the best way to ensure victims and witnesses are given the best possible assistance throughout the criminal justice system. There is still work to do, however, it is pleasing to see the efforts to date have not gone unnoticed.

[You can read the Warwickshire inspection report here.](#)

Requiring police officers to have degrees is misguided



Picture by Flickr user Ben Stephenson, used under a [Creative Commons](#) agreement.

On Thursday at the College of Policing's conference in Berkshire, proposals that would require all new police officers in England and Wales to obtain a degree were unveiled. The idea is to make all new police applicants complete either a degree in practical policing or take a conversion course after graduating in another subject. A consultation has been launched.

The College of Policing has an important role to play and has been involved with bringing many beneficial ideas into policing - but this is not one of them. The obsession with academic qualifications and the belief that it brings some kind of guarantee of quality is completely misguided.

One of the few advantages of age is that it brings with it experience and, over the years, I have had the privilege of working with hundreds of people, both graduates and non-graduates. There have been some of those with degrees – including from our most prestigious universities – that I wouldn't trust with organising breakfast. Equally, there are many non-graduates for whom I have the highest respect.

Far more important than a degree is life experience and good-old-fashioned common sense for which academic qualifications are not awarded. Are we now abandoning the principle that 'the police are the public and the public are the police' in favour of one in which our police force is some sort of academic elite? Do we really want to insist that our police officers to begin their careers saddled with the debts that academic courses bring and do we want to recruit only from the social classes that can afford to take the financial risks of enrolling on these courses?

Of all the ideas that have been proposed for policing during my term of office, this has to be one of the worst. It has all the hallmarks of 'ivory tower' thinking and I

hope that it is firmly consigned to the dustbin within a very short order before too much time and energy is wasted upon it

Correction

In last week's newsletter I reported my attendance at Bedworth and Bulkington Neighbourhood Watch's AGM. A slip of the keyboard meant that I stated the chair of group was Lynne Clarke - it is of course Lynne Price. Lynne Clarke is a name from my flying past. She too was a feisty lady who became a representative for EasyJet pilots and is now a base Captain. I hope I can be forgiven for confusing these two formidable ladies' names.

In the news this week



I read this week reports that Shane O'Conner is leaving BBC Coventry and Warwickshire's Breakfast Show, with a new team of presenters taking over in the New Year. I'm sad to see Shane go, as I have always enjoyed our on air exchanges over the years, covering all manner of topics. I've always found Shane to be fair and balanced, giving the opportunity for both sides of a story to be aired, while at the same time always asking probing questions of his interview guests. He's even prepared to admit when he's been wrong or changed his views on an

issue - a quality I'm still working on! Whatever the future holds for Shane, I wish him well.

Other news stories that may be of interest this week:

Nuneaton News: Police tuck shop backs Nuneaton Wildlife sanctuary

Tamworth Herald: Seven more sentenced over Atherstone football violence

Stratford Herald: Course launched to help bikers stay safe

Diary look ahead: Monday 16th to Friday 20th November



Here are my key diary appointments for the coming week.

Monday 16th November

10:30am - Attending the Local Government Association Independent Group Conference, London

Tuesday 17th November

9:30am - Interviewing for Legally Qualified Chairs, Birmingham

6.30pm - Public Scrutiny Meeting, Leamington

Wednesday 18th November

9.30am - Attending Warwickshire County Council round table event, Warwick

3:00pm - Meeting with prospective PCC Election Candidate, Philip Seccombe, OPCC

Thursday 19th November

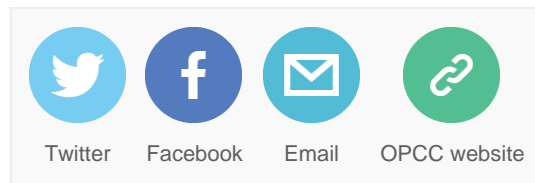
8:45am - Attending Nicholas Chamberlaine School to see Street Aware assembly, Bedworth

6:00pm - Meeting with Community Safety Ambassadors, Warwick

Friday 20th November

11:00am - Police and Crime Panel meeting, Stratford

Keep up to date with the latest news from the Warwickshire PCC



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