



Sam Dobbs BA FRSA PGCE
Daventry District Command

Daventry Police Station
New Street
Daventry
NN11 4BS

Telephone | for all non-emergency calls, dial **101**
If dialling from outside Northamptonshire, use 03000 111222

Extension 343805 | Mobile extension 776070
Email | sam.dobbs@northants.police.uk

Date | 12 December 2016

Dear Sir/Madam

DAVENTRY POLICE CHRISTMAS/END OF YEAR MESSAGE

The end of the year seems a good time to send a message to our community, especially given the feedback that updates are generally what we are not good at. As one of the sergeants leading the community policing of our 70+ rural parishes in Daventry District, I'm taking time out to share my reflections which will mirror and complement the messages I have been trying to give as I get around the parish council meetings, and respond to some of the comments and concerns regularly raised with me.

Contact with the police, especially by senior citizens, is something which parish councils and the Independent Advisory Group (IAG) has raised as being a subject which needs constant attention, which is why I'm writing now and also why I've created the document which accompanies this one (*'Contacting the Police at Daventry'*) – hopefully answering all your questions about contacting your local police all in one place. As important for me, is to convince our community that we both want and need your calls or information. People think we are too busy, and indeed we are busy, but we police only with your consent, as members of your community, and your information and support is vital. Don't sit and worry whether we need to know something – tell us and let us decide?

The subject of the visibility of policing is in the headlines as I write and I'm often asked what I think about the levels of policing in our District as I both live within it and am a parish councillor where I live. I know and believe that we are still blessed to live in one of the safest places in the county with low levels of crime and antisocial behaviour. I also know that people's perception of crime sometimes doesn't match the reality (and I don't dismiss the concerns.) I also know that we live in a quickly growing District and that the urbanisation of our District will change the policing demands and could further dilute our resources.

However, the police service nationally, and particularly our Force, is having to plan for continued and sustained funding reductions, alongside other public services. That is not a bleat – it's fact. At the same time, we are facing an exponential rise in the new types of crime – online crime and child sexual exploitation are two massive areas of growth (sadly). Our priority is to protect people from harm, so in the face of reduced budgets and increased demand, we are having to look closely how to balance everything, which is why the Commissioner has recently sought your views on the new policing plan. Things will have to be done differently.

www.northants.police.uk
Protecting people from harm



Follow us on Twitter
@sgtsamdobbs
@NorthantsPolice

Protecting people from harm in the here and now requires response policing which is why there is (and will continue to be) a permanent response team based at Daventry serving our quite massive geographical land mass. That team has been depleted of late, which is why after Christmas we will see some of our community officers posted permanently onto the response teams – a blow to the community teams, but the logic of which cannot be argued against.

In addition, a review of the force (known as the Service Delivery Model – SDM) has been taking place to look scientifically at where and how to deploy our precious resources, based on vulnerability and risks in the policing arena I describe. Chief Officers will deliberate on the SDM early in 2017 and I believe we can expect this to present them with some challenging discussions with the Commissioner on how to balance all that is expected of us and how policing might change and develop in the rural communities like ours.

A poll published in The Sun newspaper has been much discussed – a poll of 26,000 people on the subject of ‘Bobbies on the Beat’. This criticised policing for having removed bobbies from the beat, as we have done. However, another poll suggested that 72% of people felt crime and antisocial behaviour were not a problem or not much of a problem.’ And then, the positive, if confusing yet welcome news was that Northamptonshire was cited as the force with the fewest people who hadn’t seen a beat officer in the past year – only 12%, making us the most visible. It’s certainly a mixed set of messages depending which standpoint one wants to take.

What the local community say to me is that they are weary of standpoints, spin and statistics and they often ask me what **my** view is on visibility and policing the country parishes and the town parish. My response is generally around the following:

We should stop talking about visibility because it can mean so many different things to different people. You cannot speak to the police through a car windscreen, and so patrolling through parishes in cars may be visible but not of much value. I could set up a scheme to have every parish driven through every week, and it would be (in my humble opinion) of little value.

The founder of British policing, Sir Robert Peel created in 1829 what are now known at the ‘Peelian’ principles of law enforcement and they are quite brilliantly timeless. Google them and see what you think. There ones that stand out to me are:

- The requirement for the police to have public approval, cooperation and respect
- Public/police relationships should reflect that the police are the public and the public are the police. Police officers are the only members of the public to give full time attention to the duties which are incumbent on every citizen in the intent of community welfare
- The test of police efficiency is the absence of crime and disorder and **not** the visible evidence of police action in dealing with them.

We have seen constant reductions in community policing nationally and locally and in other aspects of policing in Daventry. As a resident, that worries me. As a police officer, though, I cannot argue with the solid rationale that there are other areas of the county with exceeding serious problems requiring policing. I also cannot argue against the spectre that is all around us in having to do more to protect vulnerable people – especially children – with the current and continuing increase in the targeting of young people in the most serious of crime.



I recently attended a fascinating Westminster Briefing on the future of neighbourhood (community) policing, and it is clear that in areas of low risk and vulnerability (such as is Daventry District) there are methods which preserve that which makes us feel safe. These include putting police constables in more numbers where the risk and vulnerability is, but increasing the numbers of police community support officers (PCSOs) in those areas. We also need to reassess what we mean by visibility. I predict that these will be ongoing discussions in the New Year.

I have been asking parish councils to consider that a better term than **visibility** might be **approachability**. If the public don't see us (and the good feedback in Northants nationally is that they do) then in community policing, it's vital that they know how to contact us, when to contact us and who to contact. Named, known local contacts are vital, as are the networks like social media. I am bowled over by the difference it has made this year to have more PCSOs (and me) tweeting regularly. Even in one of those parishes which sponsors its own PCSO and where the PCSO is not allowed to patrol other than in the sponsored area, I received criticisms about his visibility. However, he now tweets regularly about his work and what he is doing. The sponsoring parish has a live feed of the Twitter account on the parish Facebook front page, and the feedback has been very good: reinforcing my point that it may be about approachability, not necessarily visibility. I can no longer send a representative to every parish council meeting, but am trying to get around the meetings to explain why. I want to support those parishes which sponsor a PCSO and work with colleagues to see how this can be developed further as the District increases in size.

I see the role of parish councils as being important in assisting us maintain our feeling of safety, and this will not always be a relationship with us accompanied by birds singing and angels overhead. We operate in a tough environment and good robust relations with parish councils where rough and smooth can be talked through is something we can develop. We have some excellent parish councils and want to work with them more in 2017. One of the biggest criticisms as our resources have reduced, has been our inability to publish crime and ASB details parish by parish. The good news is that our sector support volunteer has now been given the capacity to work from home and I am hoping that he will regularly be in contact with all our key contacts with important updates and messages from me, alongside the crime information we are often asked for. This shows me what sterling value our volunteers (including our special constables) can add to local policing.

In areas where we cannot deliver what the public want, we are working on supplementary initiatives. A good example of that would be the problem of speeding. Every parish complains of this as a problem and we will only concentrate on enforcement in areas where there are known incidents which kill or seriously injure. Community Speedwatch now allows participating parishes to have responsible members of the public trained to assist in enforcement in the areas of concern where the police cannot provide the response wanted. Daventry District already has a number of schemes in operation.

My rural officers have been doing sterling work targeting the farming communities – the eyes and ears of the rural areas. It means that I have agreed to local officers holding events in pubs at times which suit the farmers. Clipston pub was recently packed with 60+ farmers in dialogue with the rural teams talking about prevention and who's up to what. It has created a more challenging environment for the people who exploit the large areas and low levels of policing by committing crime around farms, stables and rural businesses. We've had some very good arrests.



I place value and time in our relationship with a very active Neighbourhood Watch across the District – volunteers who are critical friends out there ensuring messages get passed both ways to maintain safety and protect people from harm. NHW is not about curtain twitching – it's about responsible people known in their community. If your community doesn't have a NHW, please ask why or consider forming one.

Our schools are key parts of our community – communities within communities – and we have had groundbreaking innovation with PCSO Kirsten Bates' 'Blue Butterfly' project to help both protect our young people and open up channels for them to report harm or risk of harm. I expect my officers and staff to have first class relationships with our schools and academies. A recent visit as a guest to the Parker-EACT Academy's Awards night was a humbling reflection on the young talent in our community and a slap in the face for anyone who continues to bleat on that Daventry's schools aren't good. They are, and the achievement statistics show that. I continue to be impressed by the leadership in all our schools – areas where we really can tackle crime before it happens.

We recently hosted a visit by Chris Heaton-Harris MP and his Westminster team, who patrolled with us on foot and in cars, and it reminded me of the value of the relationship we have with elected members, council officers and other partners from the public service and voluntary sector. I believe we are well-connected and thrive from the benefits of a tight-knit community where people know each other and understand their community well. I guffawed when Chris met someone who proclaimed she had voted for him – then asked him which political party he represented. I thank our MP and all our councillors for their support, regardless of their politics.

A mantra of mine, when I deliver potentially unpopular news on policing levels or visibility is that for the majority of us in policing, we are not primarily motivated by money, number or politics. We are motivated by a common purpose of wanting to make society better and protect people who need protection. Whatever is thrown at us, and whatever unpalatable changes come at us in the year ahead, I want you to know that you can be assured of our commitment, passion and energy to do absolutely what we can to police Daventry District using minimum force and maximum creativity. To do that, we need the best engagement and rapport. I suggest that responsibility for that is 50% mine and 50% yours.

Christmas provides an opportunity for the less scrupulous in society to benefit. That is why we have a Daventry Town centre campaign (Operation Lapland) to minimise crime and ASB for those who want to enjoy the festivities. That is why we will be targeting drink-drivers. That's why we are running publicity campaigns which hopefully won't scare you, but will raise awareness of protecting your presents, securing your property and not leaving your cars running whilst defrosting them. Through Christmas, our teams will be working round the clock as well as trying to balance work with family celebrations. I assure you that this will be laced with good humour and goodwill. If you see my staff out and about, do please spread some cheer with them. It is with that goodwill and thanks at Christmas that I conclude, by wishing you and yours a safe and happy Christmas, thanking you for your support of policing in 2016 and asking for your continued support in what will be a challenging 2017. With challenge will come opportunity and that excites me (at least I keep telling myself that it should!)

SAM DOBBS
District Sergeant

