

Winchester City Councillors November report

Rural crime forum

I attended the rural crime forum organised by Flick Drummond. It was reasonably well attended and had an impressive panel. Hampshire's police and crime commissioner, Donna Jones, was the key speaker along with Inspector Korine Bishop, Community Safety Officer Gary McCulloch and Gary Brown of Winchester City Council.

Donna Jones took the opportunity to emphasise her commitment to 600 more police officers within Hampshire and the Isle of Wight by 2023 and the importance she gives to one of her other 9 priorities being that of targeting rural crime.

Interestingly Donna has recently funded the purchase of 3 off-road and 3 high performance motor bikes. The vehicles were purchased earlier this year and officers have since been putting them to good use across Hampshire. As hoped, they have provided an entirely new tactical option for officers to follow those who seek to evade police on motorbikes on roads, or by going off-road into areas cars just couldn't access.

Fly tipping

I have definitely noticed a local surge in fly tipping in our area, not just witnessed by myself but also reported by many of the parishes. I have asked for the most up to date figures to see if this is really the case.

Gary Brown is the Fly tipping officer for WCC and was also a panellist at the rural crime event. I spoke to him about what was the one big thing he would do to make it go away. He was clear that, other than making commercial waste disposal totally free which is just not viable, fly tipping is on the whole organised criminal activity that can only be stamped out by successful prosecution.

There is a common misconception that restrictions on booking times and charges for certain items at the local tip are at the root of the problem. This is not born out by the evidence and it really does come down to rogue traders dumping their own waste or the waste of people they have charged to allegedly dispose of legally.

Gary started in his full time role in April. Prior to that this was a part time role and hopefully this will mean over time successful prosecutions will increase and word will spread that fly tipping is a risky pursuit.

The council do employ some hidden cameras in a variety of locations but by far the best source of evidence comes from the public. Everyone has a camera these days. For notifying fly tipping by far the easiest way is by using the Winchester App alternatively go onto the website but you will need to provide your login details.

Accredited Community Safety Officer

At the rural crime forum a number of us pointed out that we rarely see a police officer on patrol and so I was fascinated to hear about the role that Gary McCulloch has as the Swanmore ACSO and wondered if this was something other parishes in our ward should consider. The role is paid for by the parishes but this could be something shared over a number of parishes.

The following is extracted from an email from Cllr Jon Woodman of Swanmore pc and gives you a brief outline of the role and also I can show you some of Gary's reports/incidents so you can get an idea of what he does. The reports are confidential and can't be attached but they are happy for you to have sight of them at the next meeting.

It's important to flag that Gary's role doesn't replace the Police. He works with the police, and often saves them time, but he is not a replacement for your local PCSO. You would however see the ACSO more than the PCSO....

Probably one of the most important things that the role offers is a point of contact for anyone in the village who has concerns about safety, anti social behaviour, fraud, door step callers, all sorts. They will contact Gary to seek help, ask advice etc etc. If Gary can't help he will sign post to the relevant authority. If there are particular incidents in the village, Gary will review CCTV, get as much info as he can and then pass on to the police. If the incident isn't a police matter, then Gary can and will act accordingly. For example, with anti social behaviour he will identify the offenders and then speak to their parents. With neighbour disputes he often goes and knocks on the door of the neighbour to chat through the problem from both sides.

Gary is accredited, which means the Chief Constable from Hampshire Constabulary has accredited Gary with the powers to:

- require a name and address
- require a name and address for anti-social behaviour
- require persons aged under 18 to surrender alcohol
- seize tobacco from a person under 16
- issue a Fixed Penalty Notice for fly-posting
- issue a Fixed Penalty Notice for littering
- stop cycles
- control traffic for purposes other than escorting a load of exceptional dimension
- issue a Fixed Penalty Notice in relation to offences against certain parish bye-laws

These Powers allow Gary to work with the Police and partner agencies even more effectively, and gives him the tools to help make Swanmore safer. They are setting up the administration system behind the Fixed Penalty Notices. This would be the same for any village he worked in.

The role is a huge success in Swanmore, with a reduction in anti social behaviour, residents feeling safer, engaged and looked after and adds a much needed community element to the

parish council. They also have improved relationships with the Police, WCC Environmental Teams, HCC Adult/child services, schools etc etc

The current hourly rate is around £18 per hour, plus an admin charge of 10%. They don't make any money from this, the hourly rate covers Gary's salary inc pension, NI etc, and the admin fee covers parish councils time.

If this is something you would like to explore further they would be happy to discuss it with you. It's probably also worth flagging that they have had a lot of interest in the role, and a number of parishes are hoping to take the role further.

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