

June 12, 2023: Ben Adams, Police, Fire & Rescue and Crime Commissioner meeting with local parish councils at Henhurst Social Club

Ben Adams was elected as Staffordshire's commissioner just over two years ago. He had previously served as a district and county councillor and stood as a parliamentary candidate in Stoke-on-Trent. He is one of only five commissioners in the country who have fire and rescue in their remit.

His role as commissioner includes holding the police, fire and rescue services to account. He explained that his view is that the public should have as much access as possible to the statistics and the information he sees. He has a website that contains a lot of useful information about his role. <https://staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk/>

He also recommended that everyone can see the latest crime statistics for their area by going to <https://www.staffordshire.police.uk/> and inputting their postcode on the home page.

STRETTON ISSUES

I raised the issue of us not having any PCSOs at our meetings since the pandemic, and Mr Adams has promised to raise this with our local chief inspector. The other parish councils who attended the meeting are getting some visits from their PCSOs, but Mr Adams made the point that there are 280 parish councils in Staffordshire and that there are not 280 PCSOs in the county.

I also mentioned that last summer we had feedback from local residents that when they responded to our appeals to report any vandalism and anti-social behaviour they witnessed they did not get replies or feedback. Mr Adams said one of his objectives was to improve communication and ensure a more robust feedback loop.

He urged residents to continue to report incidents as this is vital. Even small incidents can be a piece in a much larger jigsaw of detecting more serious crimes and crime prevention. He asked anyone with reports to make to call 101 or to use the 'report' button that you will find on the home page of the Staffordshire Police website at <https://www.staffordshire.police.uk/>

The non-emergency number, 101, is getting 25% more calls than a year ago and more serious and complicated issues are being reported via this route, which has prompted the introduction of a triage system.

Mr Adams also said 999 call-handling time had also improved in the past two years with calls usually answered within 10 seconds.

STAFFING LEVELS

He said that 400 new officers have been recruited since 2019, but many of these are still going through their two to three years of training including spells at university. More officers will hopefully be recruited as Staffordshire is still not back to its highest levels of staffing. There are also PCSO vacancies. But Mr Adam said Staffordshire currently has more PCSOs than most of the country but is lower, on average, on officers.

EARLY INTERVENTION PROJECTS

Mr Adams said he believed it was important to invest in programmes that help and support youngsters in the community before they develop anti-social and criminal behaviours. He funds a programme called Space that brings together public, voluntary and private sector organisations to provide fun, positive activities for vulnerable young people to help increase their skills, improve their

health and wellbeing and create opportunities, while also aiming to reduce levels of anti-social behaviour.

Grants of up to £10,000 are still available through East Staffordshire's Community Safety Fund for local groups and charities that want to run early intervention projects. See more at <https://www.eaststaffsbc.gov.uk/community-safety/community-safety-fund> or contact East Staffordshire's Community Safety Partnership Team.

SCHOOL PARKING AND SPEEDING

A number of councillors brought up issues with parking around schools and speeding. Every school in Staffordshire, in fact every school in the country, experiences issues with parking. The Commissioner said he was aware of concerns and his team had been working on projects such as '20 is plenty' and bollards outside schools. He hoped, although he could not make firm promises, that when officer numbers improved he would be able to get officers to make occasional surprise patrols of schools every few weeks.

On the issue of speeding, he praised the growth of Community Speedwatch Groups in many areas of Staffordshire. He also revealed that a new app was about to be launched, initially in Stoke-on-Trent, which would record speeding data and report it back within a week (instead of six months as at present) allowing the most serious problem areas to get visits by speed vans.

- Elaine Pritchard