

Committee	COUNCIL MEETING
Date	11th June 2018
Agenda Item	12

Policing in Halstead

Concerns over policing in Halstead are much in the minds of local people. There is the constant worry of drug dealing in Kings Road, and addicts in the public gardens, vandalism, and more recently the daylight rape. These matters were raised by some of those who visited the Queens Hall Open day. This was seen by some as an opportunity to talk about their worries for the town.

HTC has been informed that the specials programme has now once again had the go ahead, with some modifications. These are around where the officers are located, and may have implications for travel costs.

A second meeting has now been held with Les Hawkins, who is in charge of the specials programme. He has explained that the delays to the programme were caused through high-level discussions between the new leaders of the police and the Fire Service. These discussions were around where the special community constables would be based. It has been decided that as they carry CS gas, which is classed as a weapon, the officers cannot be based in any other premises than a police station. For this reason, any specials working in Essex will have to drive from where they live to the nearest Community Policing base, which in our case is Braintree Police station. When they sign in there will be 2 options. The preferred option is that they pick up a police vehicle and then park it in Halstead at a safe location (Fire station/Council offices). The second option is that they drive back to Halstead in their own car to carry out their duty and then return to Braintree to sign off at the end of their shift. The need to sign on and off will mean that more of the funds will be spent on travel expenses than originally imagined, and if officers have to use their own car while on duty that will also increase travel costs. A return journey to Braintree police station will cost £6.30 at present fuel costs – which would come to £12.60 per shift if the officer is using his/her own car. The time on duty will also be reduced as the travel time has to be taken into consideration.

When an officer is recruited, they sign up to a minimum of 16 hours per week, which would cost £350 per year in expenses. Under the new system, if the officer were using his/her own car to go to Braintree twice on each shift, the cost would be £605 in expenses per officer per year. It is expected that those who are committed will do more hours than the minimum.

Essex is the first county to embark on this project, and councils are signing up to it in desperation, as the police are saying that they cannot cope with criminal matters due to the harsh staffing cuts being made. The idea is that the specials will work very closely with the council, and should attend meetings, and should listen to what the council feels is needed in the town. Witham Town Council has budgeted for 5 specials, and 2 are so far in the recruitment pipeline. They have already held a public meeting with Commander Craig Carrington, and have another one planned with Priti Patel MP and Roger Hirst, to discuss the serious antisocial behaviour in the town. The Witham Town Clerk has also said that it is possible to cancel the whole programme after a year if it does not seem to be working.

Maldon Town Council have also stated that they are very likely to recruit 2 specials.

Provision has been made in the HTC budget for 5 specials going forward.

Recommendation: that HTC once again considers whether to commit to taking on 3 special constables, and review the effectiveness after 12 months.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Greateorex". The script is cursive and somewhat stylized, with the first name "Sarah" and the last name "Greateorex" clearly legible.

Sarah Greateorex
Town Clerk