

Chief Constable, Police & Crime Commissioner, guests, ladies and gentlemen welcome to Kent Police Federation's Open Meeting at the Mercure Great Danes Hotel.

Before I start my speech it is only right and proper that we remember colleagues who are sadly no longer with us. Since last year policing has seen the loss of a number of officers. In Kent we witnessed the tragic loss of 3 serving officers: Adrian Grew, Andrew Cheney and Pete Wakerly. We have also lost two retired police officers who had continued working for Kent Police as PSEs post retirement – Stephen “Bernie” Flintoft and Mick Toy. Our thoughts continue to be with their families, friends & colleagues. Let us stand, united as the police family, for a few moments of quiet reflection as we remember all our colleagues who have passed away since we last met.

Thank you.

For those of you who don't know me I am Ian Pointon your Federation Chairman.

We have one open meeting “*virgin*” here tonight - ACC Jo Shiner.

Welcome to your first open meeting. There should have been 2 “*virgins*”.

Sadly ACC Matthew Horn cannot be with us; Mr Horn and I have

something of a connection; not only were we born in the same town, but also the same maternity home. Only our mothers can tell us apart.

Let me introduce the platform to you.....

Since last November we have seen some changes. Mr Learmonth was given a balloon and retired. Following a gruelling selection process based on amongst other things Kent's coastal geography, and yes Mrs Barnes I agree it is a "huge coastline", Mr Pughsley was appointed. Welcome to your first open meeting as our Chief Constable.

There are times when the Police Federation has accused members of ACPO of being like butterflies, fluttering gently from force to force never staying long enough to take responsibility for their.....*"better"* decisions. Well sir, a butterfly you are not. I have never witnessed you "flutter gently" anywhere. You came to Kent as an ACC in 2009, have been promoted to DCC and you are now here for the next 5 years as our Chief Constable. I believe that shows real commitment to Kent; real commitment to the people of Kent; and more importantly it shows real commitment to the police officers and staff who, despite all the cuts, continue to ensure we provide an excellent service to the people of Kent.

Mrs Barnes, last year you addressed our open meeting. Putting it mildly, the feedback was not great. You stated you were going to be “open and honest” with us. I hope you don’t mind if this year I return the favour. Let me remind everyone of what you said. You told officers they were their “own worst enemy” for being “inward looking and suspicious”. You exhorted them to “let in the light and open the doors”. You told them to have a “positive relationship with the media”. You advised us all such a positive relationship would “increase confidence” in us and the work we do. You stated your determination to “let the light in”. Well, nobody can accuse you of not taking your own advice. You opened your doors to Channel 4 and you certainly let them shine their light into your world. Unfortunately we all had to witness the result - “Meet the Police Commissioner”. Alas, it did not produce your forecast increase in confidence.

Colleagues, when the programme was aired, I, as your elected Chairman, and on your behalf, attempted to put some distance between the office of the PCC and policing in Kent as I felt there was a distinct possibility that we could be turned into a laughing stock. The media were having lots of fun; it was a headline writers dream. I took great care to reassure the people of Kent, and in fairness the rest of the English

speaking world, about who was in charge of operational policing in Kent – the Chief Constable.

The world is full of great unexplained mysteries. Is there life on other planets; what happens in the Bermuda Triangle; does Nessie really exist; why is my suitcase always the last one to appear on the baggage carousel? There is however one mystery greater than all these. Mrs Barnes, tonight, will you please explain the meaning of the “onion”.

Enough of all that or I’ll be on the naughty chair or worse, given a detention.

There was, however, one positive within the show. Mrs Barnes, you tried to increase the precept beyond the Government’s cap to provide extra resources for Kent Police. Whilst ultimately you were not successful due to an unreceptive, stony faced Police & Crime Panel coupled to a referendum process totally loaded against you, it would be remiss of me not to commend and thank you for the effort you made.

Each year, when I sit down to write an open meeting speech I try to think of a theme. Those of you who have been here before will recall the

topics I have covered – performance, numeric targets, cuts and morale to name a few.

Over the years, it is fair to say that my speech has often been written against a backdrop of Chief Officers not listening; against a back drop of gatekeepers keen to block what they see as uncomfortable messages; too often in the past against a backdrop of blind denial.

Chief Constable, I am pleased to say that a lack of listening is not an accusation that can be levelled at you. You have listened and continue to do so. For that we thank you. I know that you appreciate the benefits of open, honest and constructive dialogue.

Last year we were a few months into our culture change programme; we were a few months into the abandonment of numeric targets. Another 12 months down the road and these targets have vanished; the performance culture of Kent Police has changed. The culture of performing has not.

Importantly the change of culture within Kent Police has gone far beyond the abandonment of numeric targets. Having been your Chairman for over 12 years I can say the relationship between the Federation and Chief Officers has never been better.

Do we have our differences? Of course we do, but importantly we talk and can invariably reach a compromise. There is an openness that we welcome wholeheartedly. That openness extends beyond this relationship, with Chief Officers going out onto division to speak directly with officers. When the new model was launched in June, it became very clear at an early stage that slip shifts were not working. We relayed that to Chief Officers as did officers, supervisors and managers. In the past I know the response would have been – we'll carry on and review it in 6 months. We'd have left officers struggling to cope. This time the shift pattern was altered very quickly, within weeks. Sir, this is a prime example of you listening to police officers whether that is directly or through their staff association; it's a prime example of our changed culture.

There is one theme tonight, and I doubt it's a surprise to anyone – demand reduction. Chief Constable, please listen once again.

Over the last 4 years we have seen 500 police officers and 700 police staff leave Kent Police.

At the recent party conferences the Conservatives promised another £25bn worth of cuts if re-elected whilst Labour promised to stop the loss of a further 1,000 police officers; that's 23 officers per force; frankly

that's like asking the crew of the Titanic to start bailing her out with an egg cup.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary has an equally gloomy forecast – whatever you cut in the first round then be ready to cut the same again. So potentially that's at least another 500 police officers gone; that would take us down to at best, 2,700 police officers, 150 below what we had in 1985. You don't need me to remind you how the world has changed since then, how demand has increased. If the HMIC prediction is true then I fear we will be reduced to little more than a fire brigade service responding to emergencies; no capacity for proactive policing; no capacity to target those prolific criminals who make so many people's lives a misery.

Whatever the reality of all these forecasts, we can clearly do nothing to increase the supply of either police officers or staff so we need to address demand. We must maintain an ability to deal with serious and organised crime and at the same time try to remain in touch with the communities we serve. If we cannot do these then we will no longer be able to discharge all the duties of the proud office we all hold.

Chief Constable, you and I have spoken about demand. Your predecessor has spoken about it at previous open meetings. I know that you have attempted to reduce officers' workloads – we no longer visit

every victim of crime. We are told this has freed up thousands of hours of time. We no longer waste hours collecting and counting meaningless ticks in boxes. However, whatever time is freed up seems to be instantly gobbled up by something else. I know that you are looking at a variety of measures to try and reduce demand and I am sure you will expand on those tonight.

Let's be under no illusion. This is not as easy as saying that we must work longer or harder or that we must "work smarter" or "do things differently". Such phrases are nothing more than worthless sound bites used by politicians and think tanks that offer no real answers to the problems we face. Officers are on their chin straps. They are exhausted. They are close to, if not beyond, breaking point. Morale is at rock bottom. What I say next is a fairly accurate barometer for morale. Many of the calls into the Federation office are about overtime, but officers are not asking what payment they're entitled to. No they are asking if they can be forced to work overtime. Many officers simply don't want to work it. Why? Not because they don't want to protect and serve the people of Kent. Not because they don't need the money. Frankly if they stay at work they're accumulating more work, more crime reports and more prisoners. They know they will not have the time to deal with them properly; deal with victims properly. I repeat: Officers of every rank and in every department are exhausted.

The proportion of officers on long term sick leave (over 28 days) with some form of psychological illness is running at over 50% peaking at 65% just 2 months ago. That should ring very loud alarm bells. Equally alarming, recent reports have shown sickness levels at a five year high. These sickness levels are set in a context of an enormous increase in the number of ill-health retirements, retirements that have suppressed those sickness figures. So we have even less doing more.

So, how can we reduce demand? How can we lift some of the burden from officers?

What I am about to say is where I think we can start to make a real impact on demand reduction. This is not based on the world according to me but rather what officers are telling their local Federation representatives up and down the County.

Sir, as I have said, we went through a culture change programme, a programme that continues with you leading from the front as chairman of the culture board. However, this culture change passed over one department that's crucial to demand reduction - the Force Control Room. I am aware that T/Chief Superintendent Kiell is now leading a culture review within that department, but tonight is our opportunity, on behalf of

the membership, to highlight what we feel needs to change. It is also an opportunity to ask you to provide the all-important “top cover” for the FCR culture review; the same “top cover” you have provided and continue to provide for the culture change in rest of the Force.

Now, before I start let me be absolutely clear. I am not criticising the staff, supervisors, managers or senior managers within that department. It is however time to change the culture of that department.

I sat with a group of inspectors from the FCR and asked them about the culture there. They painted a bleak picture. They described a culture of rigid protocols and policies that, far from guiding staff actually bind them. They described a culture of blame and criticism not learning. They described a culture in which getting the caller’s details in the right order is far more important than the information itself.

The FCR is not and never should be a British Gas type call centre where “calls are monitored for training purposes” or where “terms and conditions apply”.

When anyone joins an organisation they rightly need policies and procedures to abide by, but there comes a point when you have to let

experience and skills shine through. You need to let the staff use their discretion and professional judgement. It's time to empower the staff to say that isn't a police matter; we won't be sending an officer; here's a number for an organisation that can help you.

I am constantly told of calls that we shouldn't be attending; calls that are simply not a police matter. I have been provided with examples, examples that I have passed on. To the man who lives next to a canal and reports swans in his garden – I say here's the number of the RSPB. To the nursing home manager who wants us to speak to a gentleman with advanced dementia about his behaviour – I say there's really no point. To the parents who adopted a little girl and are worried she may have inherited her birth parents propensity to shoplift – I say, even with my extremely limited medical qualifications, namely an out of date first aid certificate, I am positive that thievery isn't genetically passed on from one generation to another.

Interestingly, the current FCR policy is to remove all police officers with the exception of inspectors and above. The rationale for this I neither know nor understand. I am seeing officers being sent back to division; officers with medical restrictions. They are being removed from an operational role they can perform; an operational role to which they

currently bring their skills and experience, to a role they can't fully perform. The staff within the FCR lose an important point of reference; somebody they can go to for valuable advice and guidance; somebody with years of policing experience; somebody who can sift the calls the police do not need to attend. This seems like madness to me. Perhaps it is time to push the pause button on this.

Let me be frank. The FCR pressures to follow practices and procedures, as opposed to the application of experience and common sense, are rooted in policing's aversion to risk. It's the same risk aversion that makes us think that every repeat victim of anti-social behaviour, no matter how tenuous, is a potential Pilkington. It's the same risk aversion that makes us believe that every missing person will end up in a shallow grave on the Romney Marsh. It's the same risk aversion that binds officers and staff in red tape and bureaucracy. It's got to change. We must adjust the risk dial to a level more in keeping with the resources we have. That doesn't mean we let risk go to hell in a handcart but it does mean we need to take a more proportionate approach to risk. Despite all our best efforts we will never remove all risk, yet at times it appears we try to. We simply cannot continue with the same response with 1,200 fewer people never mind when the next round of cuts bite even deeper.

Will mistakes be made? Of course they will. Mistakes are made now. Policing is all about human beings with all the frailties that involves.

Chief Constable, at the beginning I talked of the theme to this year's speech – demand reduction. I fully appreciate this isn't easy, but in a context of reducing resources it must be the Force's 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> priority. There will be some tough choices, some competing priorities. Whilst I have concentrated on reform of the FCR, I accept that such reform will not alone provide the panacea for reducing demand. There is no single solution. We need to more effectively push back on partners; all too often we're covering for their cuts. New mobile technology may help but only if it is linked to a real reduction in the bureaucracy that has a voracious appetite for officers' time; without doing this we simply displace the same workload from police stations. We have to ensure that our own internal policies actually support and not frustrate what officers are trying to do. We have to take a long hard look at solving problems at the point of reporting. We have to look beyond the political, two dimensional view of frontline policing – the frontline extends far beyond uniformed officers on patrol; we have to ensure we reduce the demands placed on all officers. Whether it's reactive crime, public protection units, covert policing, the serious crime directorate and everything in between,

their workloads need to be addressed too. We need to remember - the frontline doesn't always wear a uniform.

Chief Constable, this Force, with the original KPM, was the mother and father of the National Intelligence Model. We can proudly say that we revolutionised policing through the proactive targeting of prolific offenders. In a world of ever shrinking resources we must tackle demand if we are to maintain any sort of proactive capability; we must tackle demand if we are to protect the health and well-being of officers and staff; we must tackle demand if we are to stop policing from falling over. If we made one mistake with CSR1 it was focusing exclusively on the savings without applying the same attention to demand. We must not repeat this mistake.

This will produce some difficult messages for the public but it can be done. It must be done. Despite its so called ring-fenced funding, the public are noticing the cracks in the NHS. They are seeing the gaps in education. They are noticing the difficult choices being made by local authorities. We must not kid ourselves or the public that, despite our "can do mentality" we are somehow immune to the effects of our cuts. The public needs to understand what changes we are making and, if we are to avoid the current, popular pass-time of criticising the police for

everything, the public needs to understand why. The media needs to understand why. As an organisation, the Force needs to be proactive with this debate. I know there are things that I can say that neither you nor the PCC can. Let us help you in delivering those difficult messages. Let's work together.

Chief Constable, it's time to tell the public the truth. It's time for us to act on what we all know to be the truth. You don't get more for less; you don't even get the same for less; you only get less.

Thank you for listening.