

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 11 FEBRUARY 2021

**Question to Cllr Wilson
Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture**

By Cllr Hood

Question

My Division has seen an unprecedented crime wave since the beginning of the pandemic culminating with two arson attacks on Friday, January 29th. This has led to many residents expressing their serious concerns to me of feeling unsafe in their own homes and business owners feeling extremely vulnerable. There is considerable pressure on Stone town police officers who are stretched to the limit in tackling crime. They are working all hours and shifts to combat what is happening in the town and their continued hard work is showing results with arrests made.

Can the Cabinet Member please give an update of how Staffordshire Police are dealing with the changing face of crime during this pandemic and could this involve an increase in police officer numbers to give out a clear message that we will not tolerate the activities of the criminal element who have been coming into Stone from other areas to profit during this pandemic?

Reply

Thank you for the question. Following a discussion with Chief Superintendent Jennifer Mattinson, Head of Neighbourhoods and Partnerships at Staffordshire Police, I can provide the following update on how Staffordshire Police are dealing with the changing face of crime during this pandemic and confirmation that police officer numbers in Staffordshire are increasing.

Firstly, it is pleasing to read that the policing of Stone has drawn positive comments. The neighbourhood policing team, alongside other force depts have moved quickly to effectively tackle the recent increases in offences and to ensure the community feels safe.

During the pandemic there have been significant crime reductions across the vast majority of crime types. All crime has reduced by 14.7% meaning there have been 12,155 fewer victims this year. There have been new challenges of course for policing with a significant amount of new legislation related to Covid 19 and the Police have been asked to 'police' activities which ordinarily would not have required any intervention such as gathering with others from your household. It has been a challenge to balance the police response between what has become known as 'the 4 Es' – Engage, Educate, Encourage and Enforce.

The number of officers in Staffordshire Police is increasing as part of the 3 year programme to increase the national number of officers by 20,000 as announced by central government. The policing of Stone or any other community is never the responsibility of the Neighbourhood Policing Team alone. Whilst that team will work with local residents and are our local face of policing, they are able to call upon central resources to assist them when greater resource is needed.

This may be in the form of support from the Police's Tactical Support Team, the Roads Policing Team or the Neighbourhood Tasking Team for example. Superintendent Mattinson has confirmed that the issues that Councillor Hood referred to in Stone did receive this extra support from police force resources beyond the neighbourhood team.