

Cllr Paul Kennedy, Liberal Democrat candidate for Surrey PCC

Thank you for inviting me to highlight the priority areas where I believe Neighbourhood Watch can help make Surrey a safer place, and how I can help you do an even better job in supporting your local communities and the police.

1. My priorities

I am offering a professional, ambitious, community-based alternative in this election. I am a local councillor in Mole Valley, with a number of schemes in my ward, and a former barrister, accountant and actuary with thirty years' professional leadership experience in both public and private sectors. While I disagree with the idea of PCCs, and the associated 'ego politics' which can undermine police confidence and local accountability, it is a role for which I am qualified. For ten years I have overseen national public interest organisations on a non-political basis. Stakeholder and partnership engagement has been a vital focus of this work, and will be a big part of my approach if elected as your PCC.

Priority 1: Bring back community policing.

The Liberal Democrats have long championed community policing, and I will seek to improve Surrey Police's accountability to local communities for things like antisocial behaviour, road safety and rural crime. We all, especially women and vulnerable groups, need to feel safe in our homes and on our streets. I see expanding Neighbourhood Watch as a central part of this objective. Community policing will mean much more engagement with local police teams, who I will expect to make substantial use of your schemes.

Priority 2: Improve Surrey Police's low rate of solving crimes, and positive outcomes for victims of high harm crimes - which have halved over the last five years to just 13%.

High harm crimes include rape and sexual assaults, domestic and child abuse, and hate crime. Clearly a major part of this will be improving police training and capability. However, with the right tools and contacts, schemes can play a key role in alerting Surrey Police and other support services to warning signs earlier. Early intervention is often key to safeguarding victims and vital evidence to identify and prosecute offenders, which is why I have challenged the current PCC over things like waiting times for the 101 service.

Priority 3. A concerted campaign to reduce drugs and youth crime, and defeat organised crime.

The Liberal Democrats support a public health approach to drugs, and a major part of this will be partnership working. While Surrey Police needs to be able to work with partners across the country, including the National Crime Agency, and internationally, there is also an important role for Neighbourhood Watch. I see schemes as a vital source of intelligence for local police and other agencies in identifying locations where drug dealing takes place, and in helping young people

to say no to drugs and get the help they need. I see from your website that this is something many of you are already involved with.

2. How I can help

I am sure every PCC candidate will want to support Surrey's Neighbourhood Watch schemes. However, I believe we can do much, much more than offer encouragement and funding for specific projects.

I intend to put Neighbourhood Watch at the heart of my community policing reforms. My ambition is an active and engaged scheme for every community in Surrey. I will hold Surrey Police, and local councils, to account for their performance in helping to expand, support and above all make use of local schemes in their areas. I expect this in turn to produce a step change in the support, information and engagement you get from local police teams.

To help Surrey Police solve more crimes, and help victims earlier, I will also hold Surrey Police and other agencies to account for ensuring that you have the tools and links you need to improve reporting of crimes on a timely basis, so they can respond more quickly and effectively. I am conscious that you already have your own tools and training in this area, but I will hold Surrey Police to account for the number of crimes they solve with your help.

Thirdly, I am conscious that Surrey Police has a duty to keep all residents safe, and to ensure that your activities do not put you and your families in danger. This is never more important than when we are dealing with drugs and organised crime. I appreciate that you have your training on this, but I will want to be reassured that Surrey Police are doing everything they can to protect you.

Finally, I see Neighbourhood Watch schemes as an important source of ideas, consultation and feedback for my work as PCC and for Surrey Police. During my first year, I will seek to visit every scheme in Surrey – easier during lockdown but it will be good also to visit your communities in person.

If you have any ideas or questions to share with me, please do not hesitate to contact me. My contact details are paulkennedy@surreylibdems.org.uk or give me a call on 07947430762. Or follow me on Facebook or twitter: @paulkenld.