Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Police and Crime Commissioner Election – 15\textsuperscript{th} November 2012

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent’s voters are being urged to seize the opportunity at the first-ever elections for a Police and Crime Commissioner to choose a candidate who understands that local problems need local solutions.

At an event on 25\textsuperscript{th} September 2012 arranged by Staffordshire Third Sector Network (S3SN) the voluntary sector were given a valuable insight into the intentions of the Police and Crime Commissioner candidates, Joy Garner and Matthew Ellis. The candidates took part in a Question Time session which allowed representatives of voluntary sector organisations to ask important questions about the role of the sector within future Policing strategy and the wider Community Safety Partnerships. The event, which was attended by 75 voluntary sector representatives, featured on BBC’s Midlands Today and in the Express and Star.

A summary of the discussions featured at the event appears below;

**Police and Crime Commissioner Voluntary Sector Question Time Event: 25\textsuperscript{th} September 2012**

ME = Matthew Ellis  
JG = Joy Garner

**Voluntary and Community Sector.**

1. **As a Police and Crime Commissioner how do you see the role of the Voluntary Sector and Third Sector in supporting communities and those who have been victims of crime?** (Paul Gallagher to ask to start proceedings)

   **ME** Commissioners give organisations time to develop work and services over a 3-5 year period - Voluntary Sector work close to communities - they do things differently and have passion - it is difficult to get info - police need to work closer with communities and victims of crime - needs to be more diplomacy, individuals as consumers.

   **JG** Has worked with voluntary sector - would not interfere - voluntary sector can engage with communities at grass roots level. They have years of evidence to demonstrate what works - They are Key Partners

2. **The police continually show their appreciation for the Street Pastor initiative in Stafford. What do the candidates think of the initiative and what commitment will they give to ensure that this scheme goes from strength to strength?** - John Marshall = Stafford Street Pastors

   **JG** Similar initiative in S-o-T - Key Player in alcohol related incidents.
MC Doesn’t know scheme - There is a need to tackle root cause of binge drinking- it is a generational issue. Money needs to be well spent. If something works then support it. If so will support ‘bottom up ’front line approach.

3. If the answer to creating safer communities lies within the communities themselves, how do you plan to engage with those parts of the community that don’t currently have a voice? - Di Litchfield – Stafford District Voluntary Services

MC Has to be localised and more continuous, not just happen by holding events, has to be holistic to build a continual picture

JG Would take countywide role - visit and have public meetings and visit smaller groups to find out how they want to be consulted - face to face contact is important

Listening to and Supporting Victims

4. The Police and Social Responsibility Act mandate that the Police and Crime Commissioner must listen to the views of victims before producing the Police Plan for the area. How would you as PCC ensure that the views of victims are taken into account, and create the confidence in the process for those who are reluctant to come forward and report incidents, including vulnerable victims and the hard to reach groups? Melina Hancox – Victim Support

JG Has signed Victims Support Pledges - Plan has to be delivered in short time - by March - Home Office driving this forward. Need to gain confidence - Members/Local Authority already doing this. Better use of media and publicity around victim success stories.

MC Why can’t victims find out information re their cases? Staffordshire Care Tracker being developed. Will make changes to improve service for victims - if modernise service can create more scope for improvements for consumer of service. Need to get jobs done and come up with ideas.

5. How aware are you of the Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) role? The Staffs Moorlands, South Staffs, Lichfield, Tamworth and East Staffs ISVA service will operate until end March 2013. Staffordshire Women’s’ Aid, who currently manages the helpline and Staffordshire ISVA will not be able to take referrals in these areas after December 2012, except for Cannock and Stafford where they have funding in place until 2015.
ME  Doesn’t know scheme. Easy option to give money. There is a need to look at group to see if it delivers value for money and to understand and assess. If delivering appropriate services with outcomes then fine. Take a pragmatic view.

JG  Can’t guarantee finances. Serious priority - need to see after the election.

6. If you are elected, what do you intend to do to combat hate crime?  
-Tony Johnson - Mencap

JG  Make best use of Media - has history working with hate crime.

ME  Courts need to be more stringent and so do Police - identifying issues - make sure professionals are available to deal with cases.

Hate crime - Citizen Watch - Need safe havens for people who feel threatened and vulnerable. Need to come up with new ideas that will make a difference

Challenges for the Police

7. The Police Force has seen significant cuts to its budget which has seen a reduction in the number of Police Officers, as PCC how will you ensure that the service given to keep our communities safe is not left vulnerable due to these cuts? Dave Benge - SCIO

MC  Use of technology - In Staffordshire takes 3 times longer to process a statement - Processes need improving need to get into year 2012 a use of technology will save time. Need to do things differently - need to free up police time – changes to work in care has worked - Police Officer making arrest needs to see whole crime process through from start to finish. More officers need to be on street - perception.

JG  20% cuts too far - too deep and too soon. Will work with Chief Constable to find out what efficiencies need to be made/encouragement of special constable/against privatisation; Labour PCC would demand fairer resources from Government. Need to continue investment in IT and expand the role of the Voluntary Sector.

8. If elected, what assurances can be given that our present police force will be maintained and will not become privatised? - Frank James (Councillor)

JG  Need more warranted Officers on street - can’t privatisse warrant carrying officer but can some of functions - will not privatise.
Laptop £5k military grade being trialled that don’t break – don’t do anything other than PC Word. About not seeing anything as given - it’s about doing best job - open yourself up to scrutiny. Doesn’t believe it’s sensible for money to be given to functions when you can get cheaper

Get rid of boundaries - will stop anything that’s a waste of money.

9. If elected what systems would you put in place to ensure that the police and other statutory bodies hold information that could help protect the most vulnerable members of our community? Thus reducing the chance of a case similar to the Pilkington Hardwicke case in Leicestershire or the Gemma Hayter case in Warwickshire taking place in our county? – Tony Johnson – Mencap

ME Sensible data and knowledge sharing - making sure we hold one agency to account as in TF project.

JG Better ways of multi-agency sharing - need Stoke on Trent to be actively engaged using MASH model.

10. Confidence in the Justice System in our area is not just about the Police it is about the Courts and the decisions the Crown Prosecution make about prosecutions. How knowledgeable are you of the Justice System, and how would you ensure they work together to deliver an efficient and effective service for victims. David Wright – Crossroads care

JG Better understanding of barriers - we need to get to route of issue

ME Work in silo mentality - CPS are in target - thinks they are inflexible need to be more victim focussed, Police part of bigger system - won’t lobby the Government for more money but will lobby for more power and decision making

Police and Young People - Engaging the media

11. The media often portray the police and young people as opposing forces, how do you propose to engage, listen and work with young people to bring about a safer, more cohesive community for everyone including young people themselves? Phil Pusey - SCVYS

JG Crucial to listen – would build into schools current system – identify student commissioner and a Police Crime Commissioner School council. Would use CSR's and surveys, introduce young person’s citizen panel – need to demonstrate value for money.

ME Investing early so young people have help they need – early intervention and prevention. Getting to heart of the issue, as in the
troubled families initiative. Introduce new Staffordshire Police Cadets where young people and police work together – will be funded by the private sector.

12. Given that Police and Crime Commissioners will only ever be elected on a low turnout of electors, how do candidates propose to avoid their agendas being fixed by the panic and fear of crime fostered by the red top newspapers and by the voluble minority who will always have a reactionary view point, something which is already evident in the United States where Police Commissioners are elected? - submitted by Gerald D’Arcy -- Acting Vice Chair of Staffordshire Police Independent Advisory Group - Chairman of Action Parkside, the residents' association for the Parkside Estate, Stafford.

ME Police showing no resistance to the ideas it is an innovative position.

JG Likely to be low turnout in S-o-T - encouraging postal votes . Policies need to be amended to reflect local need. Bring back SPACE Scheme

Role of the Police and Crime Commissioner

13. There have been concerns expressed about the role of PCC being subject to Political influence, how will you make sure that this is not the case in Staffordshire but more importantly how will you ensure that the Chief Constable is not having to make policing decisions influenced by political pressure? Jane Swindall - SCIO

JG Signed undertaking not to be subject to political interference. Police Constable needs to be involved in decision making. Will not come up with gimmicks that can’t be costed. No gimmicks

Policies and discussion place that need to be followed

ME Offended that JG thinks police cadets is a gimmick - PCC role has to be about trying new ideas. Will form own judgements and apply to own politics - Don’t waste public money and be inclusive

14. In light of the recent Hillsborough findings exposing the cover up by all agencies involved in the disaster, how will the candidates ensure that if anything similar were to happen in Staffordshire that any investigations etc that might occur are carried out in a totally transparent manner? - Gill Wyatt – Carers Association South Staffs
ME  23 year cover up on this - how will ensure this won’t happen in Staffordshire. Feels visibly sick about disorder - PCC seen as defining moment where things are more transparent - about what’s right - party politics takes second place.

JE  Policies and processes in place that need to be followed.

END

Safer Future Communities is promoting Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent’s local voluntary organisations, social enterprises and community groups as a valuable resource for election candidates, the media and the voting public who want to get under the skin of local policing and community safety issues and think about better, locally inspired solutions.

We urge you to encourage your service users to make use of their vote on 15th November.