

**SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT TO SOUTH WILLESBOROUGH COMMUNITY COUNCIL
MARCH 4th 2024.**

I have decided to bring this urgent supplementary report to council tonight in view of the reports in the media following the first part of the inquiry into the terrible circumstances of Sarah Everard's kidnap and brutal murder.

I would also comment on the brutal murder in 2021 of a serving off duty PCSO Julia James of the Kent Police.

These are terrible events to read about anywhere, worst still just a few minutes' drive from these meetings.

In 2022 I wrote to Kent Police and attended several online presentations about a police campaign

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & GIRLS.

Straight away I felt their plan was flawed in that its first principle of the plan was,

HOLD OFFENDERS TO ACCOUNT

I challenged and asked for a rewrite of the plan which put **PREVENTION** as the first principle and platform. Sadly, that request was refused but I have persisted and continue to push for a review. The circumstances over recent days and the reports now being published are a mandate to continue the battle.

A fundamental basic principle of Neighbourhood Watch is to keep people crime free **BUT IMPORTANTLY** free from the fear of being a victim of crime also.

The question naturally asked is IN ASHFORD ARE WOMEN & GIRLS SAFE ? however it should be IN ASHFORD HOW SAFE DO WOMEN & GIRLS FEEL ?

It is no comfort if all agencies, councils and the police state they are safe it is do they feel safe?

I have set out below Kent Police Plan for VAWAGs and my response and requested change



Tackling Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG)

The term VAWG covers a range of crimes, the common theme is that they disproportionately affect women and girls. Although we use the term 'violence against women and girls', our approach refers to all victims of any of these offences.

Crimes and behaviour covered by the term Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) include:

- rape and other sexual offences
- domestic abuse
- stalking
- 'honour'-based abuse (including female genital mutilation forced marriage, and 'honour' killings)
- as well as many others, including offences committed online

We are committed to eradicating all forms of violence against women and girls and have a strong approach to actively pursue violent perpetrators. We want women and girls who live, work and socialise in our communities to feel safe. To achieve this we will be focussing five key areas:

1. [holding offenders to account](#)
2. [support victims](#)
3. [keeping you safe](#)
4. [our culture](#)
5. [strengthening the system](#)

I have consistently proposed the following.

1. PREVENTION
2. KEEPING YOU SAFE
3. SUPPORT VICTIMS
4. OUR CULTURE
5. HOLD OFFENDERS TO ACCOUNT (constant debrief to direct our prevention)
6. STRENGTHEN OUR SYSTEMS. (constant review).

Rather than labour the point I pose to council the following statement. You will recall I was Assistant Chief Officer Kent Fire Brigade, Head of Operations and Safety for all of Kent when I retired.

Does anyone think my plan for fire would have started with and have said.

“If your house is on fire, we will put it out”.

No absolutely not!, it would be PREVENTION, PREVENTION and then MORE PREVENTION FROM LESSONS LEARNT AND INCIDENT DEBRIEFS

At the same time as tackling the Kent Police for a rewrite of the plan I also look to councils

In my public engagement work women constantly tell me that darkness and poor street lighting concerns them and, in many circumstances, worries them deeply.

Why in Ashford are we continually allowing new build developments with poor or even no street lighting at all?

However, where it suits, we have lighting that can be seen from the orbiting space station with lights protecting lorries at junction 10A of the M20.

An aggravating factor also is a policy of “no garage doors only carports on many new build estates. Some carports are not even alongside a property. Criminals can stroll in at their leisure. Incidents of rough sleepers also. All matters that concern women.

Horrible alleyways and dark corners are all concerns to women.

I am regularly told “they have decided”. Or “it’s been decided”

Where does the blame lie. Importantly who are they?

We have, and we had the chance to try to build safer communities.

It is no good telling Women and Girls they are safe. It is no good having big words and statements like Safer Streets campaign.

The question remains DO WOMEN FEEL SAFE ON OUR STREETS IN 2024.? And can we all work towards making them feel safer.

In all my work and presentations I stress to women how they can verify that they are dealing with a Police Officer

Thank you

Peter

Peter New

Kent Police Volunteer & Community Neighbourhood Watch.

