



John Botting

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Prospective National Liberal candidate
for Police & Crime Commissioner (Kent)

manifesto



www.nationalliberal.org

My Policing Manifesto for Kent

The People's Voice Should Be Heard – Policing should be done in partnership with the public. After all we know our communities better than anyone. I will set up a Police Commissioners Public Panel – every town and city in the force area will have a representative panel of the general public - meeting regularly with the local area police commander and I on a regular basis. Each local panel will also have representation on a county panel where the Chief Constable and senior officers will be present to hear and report back on issues. They will also be held accountable for failures, to you personally. This would also deliver a greater transparency of policing matters to the general public. Once established, volunteers would also run local Police Surgeries along with local uniformed and CID officers on a monthly basis in well publicised locations where the local community can come in and raise concerns, report recent issues and offer local intelligence. Each local Police

Commissioner Public Panel would draw up a local policing plan in partnership with the local police commander.

Revamping Of the Special Constables, PCSO's and Neighbourhood Watch – I am not generally in favour of Police & Community Support Officers. It is policing on the cheap and I would instigate an independent review of the roles of PCSO's across the county. One area I would utilise PCSO's in however would be developing a more dynamic Neighbourhood Watch Scheme. This would involve them setting up, managing and improving on schemes. Reporting back information gained to local police commander. It would also involve them patrolling their neighbourhood watch area along with suitable NW volunteers. This would encourage personal responsibility and a civic duty culture. Depending on the PCSO report findings I would instigate a revamping of Special Constables training, use and

rewards. Special Constables generally have been looked down upon by the regular force. However, if trained properly, rewarded financially and treated with respect by the force, they will be a huge resource for the county. I would want a TA type force of Special Constables for the county.

Victims of Crime – As a victim of crime myself on too many occasions I know what it's like to be left in the dark when you have been a victim, where no one visits you, and no updates are given. I have experienced the “fill out the crime report” message so I can at least claim on my insurance. It is unacceptable that a victim of crime is not visited and left in the dark. I would make sure that much more emphasis is put into the treatment of victims including the following up and reporting of developments or actions taken. This would have to be audited by the police.

Crime Generally – Too much time is spent on petty issues like minor traffic offences, personal use of cannabis, minor littering etc. I would cut back on traffic divisions and bring them back into general policing. There is a

need for a traffic division, but it does not need to be as large as it is. I would instigate more targeting of career criminals and prolific offenders and get them off our streets. Too much time is spent on persecuting drivers for minor issues. Policing needs to refocus on the important, daily issues in people's lives and help stamp them out. Things like vandalism, nuisance youths and gangs, drunkenness and street fights, violent crimes, theft and burglary. People have the right to go about their local towns and cities any time of the day or night without fear of crime, and to leave their houses without worrying that they will be burgled. Part of the answer is getting police officers back into the communities in a high profile manner, walking the town, and cycling the village, beats. Out of the back room roles, back onto the front line doing what they are paid and what we expect them to do.

Finance – There is little that can be done here whilst a national government dictates to county councils what they can and cannot spend. However, I guarantee that there is much wastage in the policing budget and it makes sense to look at it. I would bring in specialists in

public sector accounting to report back on savings and better usage of budgets. One area I would like to change would be police rota's and duty times. They need to be more flexible. Police overtime is viewed as a perk and is very generous. Yes officers should be rewarded correctly and rewarded for overtime, but it needs to be given only when necessary. I also believe that the ratio of senior officers to lower ranking officers needs to be reviewed and adjusted where possible. This would free up some finance to employ more constables.

Summary - Serving police officers may be frightened at reading my manifesto. I do talk about change and that scares people. I'm sure the Police Federation would argue against some of my plans? Well that means I am doing something right! Although I am not looking for a fight with the police they must understand that change is needed. I also know how police officers think and I know how they work.

I am not frightened to challenge old and out-dated police

practices. I'm not frightened to stand up for the victims of crime, for local households and for local businesses frustrated at the lack of action on the things that are important to them. I am not frightened to bang heads together if that is called for to make things happen. The Police and Crime Commissioner should not be frightened to stand up for the people they have been selected to represent. It is a role that is very important and that will impact people's lives. It's a role that needs an understanding of both policing matters and practice, a role that includes understanding what it's like to be a victim. The role needs a vision of where policing should be and how it will get there.

The PCC needs to work in partnership with the people of Kent and of course with the Chief Constable and his staff. The role, as I see it, is one of partnership, mutual respect, understanding of each others issues and working on solutions. It's a role that I believe I have the ability to do.

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