

Choosing a candidate for Police and Crime Commissioner

On Saturday evening I attended with other Conservatives one of three party meetings to select our candidate for the Thames Valley Police Authority PCC elections.

The role of Police and Crime Commissioner has on the whole failed to capture the public imagination, with low turnouts in past elections for the role. This is a pity, as the job should be an important one. I myself was no enthusiast for this particular constitutional change, when Mrs May decided we needed to move on from Councillor Police committees to a directly elected head ,but now we have them it is important to try to make them work well.

The PCC is the man or woman who appoints the Chief Constable and who works with the Chief Constable on budgets and strategic direction of the police force. The PCC does not interfere in day to day policing or operational matters. It is not the PCC's job to direct the police to pursue this criminal rather than that one or to prosecute X and not Y. The PCC does not have the training and powers of a police officer to investigate and arrest suspects. It is the PCC's job to understand what the public wants and expects of its police service, and to set priorities, targets and direction for the police in discussion with the Chief Constable. The PCC is both there to lobby MPs and Ministers for the extra money their Chief Constable wants, and to help the Chief Constable establish priorities and create more efficient ways of doing things in the light of the budgets available.

The selection meeting was a good opportunity to review current policing and to send some messages about what the public priorities are. I pointed out that the public say they want more targeted action on drugs, gangs, street violence and illegal settlements in particular. The candidates also wanted to discuss cyber crime and social media hate speech. Some others wanted to talk about police numbers and the utility of beat policing. I look forward to seeing the Manifesto of the winning candidate in due course