

Andy Burnham
Greater Manchester Mayor
Churchgate House
Manchester
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17th September 2017

Dear Andy

I am writing to you regarding an issue which is becoming more and more the subject of complaints from local residents. I refer to the number that people are asked to contact regarding non-emergency incidents i.e. 101.

This number is increasingly difficult for people to access. They either have to wait, on occasions, for up to an hour; when they do wait sometimes the line goes dead; there is no opportunity to leave messages or even send an email. If no response is obtained from the 101 call then the incident goes unreported and people feel much less inclined to try again if and when there is something else they think should be reported. Here are some comments from recent community meetings in Stockport:

"There's no point in ringing that 101 number - nobody ever answers".

"I've not got the time to wait 20 and 30 minutes on the phone".

"Why are we told to ring this number anyway. It's hopeless trying to get through".

"We've just had a police newsletter with that stupid 101 number on it".

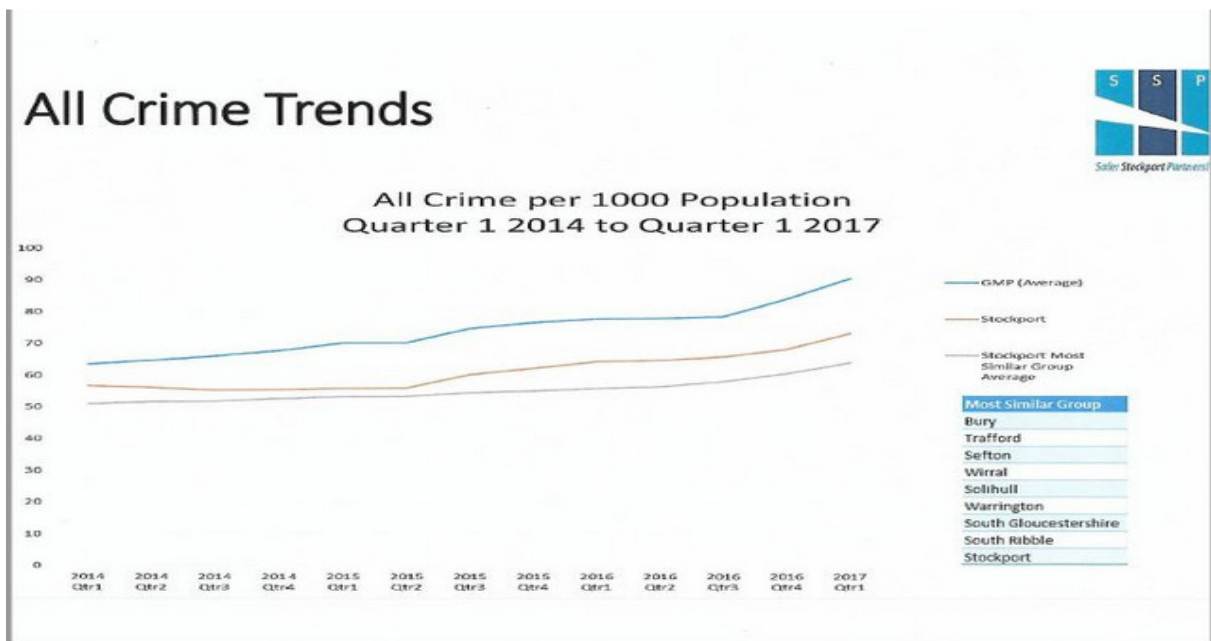
"It's the police trying to avoid doing their job. They know people will just give up".

We can't defend the situation because what people are saying is correct (apart from the last comment). Even Police Officers have held their hands up to the fact that the system is not fit for purpose.

This has three consequences - one is that the public lose faith in a system they are told to use and then fails them, secondly that the crime figures are subject to under-reporting and may be higher than they are actually shown to be and thirdly crime could be reduced by prevention if potential incidents are dealt with before rather than after they occur.

I understand completely the difficulties facing Greater Manchester Police and this is not a criticism of the work police officers do. In fact, I believe police officers find the situation as frustrating as we do because they also hear the criticism from residents.

The Safer Stockport Partnership Annual Report was presented to the Communities and Housing Scrutiny Committee on the 18th September. It contains a great deal of very good work being done by the various partners in Stockport and across Greater Manchester but it also contains the graph below:



I am not suggesting for one minute that the issue with the 101 number is the cause of the upward trend. However, with this in mind the Police need the public to report incidents, to provide information and to be the eyes and ears in their communities. To do this they need to have a means of communication they can easily use.

I think it is important that we respond to people's complaints and, whilst I acknowledge there is no easy answer, accepting there's a problem is a good first step.

Regards

CLlr Sheila Bailey
Cabinet Member Communities and Housing