PCC SPEAKS TO UNITY 101 – 24TH APRIL 2020

ML – Michael Lane  
I – Interview Ram Kalyan “Kelly”

ML: Thank you very much for inviting me to talk out loud with you, answer your questions and reach I hope lots of members of the community who we are trying to support at this time.

I: Well before we begin let me just ask you how you are coping with and how your family is coping with and at the same time how you are coping with business as usual.

ML: My job as the Police and Crime Commissioner and the policing job continues in very different circumstances so the first thing I want to do is reassure people that intervening against criminals and those who wish us harm continues to be the business of policing providing support to those who are vulnerable and victims from our service providers continues to be essential Of course we are all adjusting to social distancing, to staying at home, to the changes in our circumstances and in these times we are continuing to support people who are at risk and intervene from a policing point of view.

I: Indeed. So what is the impact of Coronavirus on policing then in deploying staff and officers to make sure we are kept safe and sound but also adhering and adjusting to new of working during this uncertain time?

ML: Of course that’s a good question. The first thing is that the policing service is an emergency service that goes forward when the rest of us has to stand back and behave differently so first of all on our community’s behalf, I hear members of the community say this regularly, I want to say thank you to the constabulary for continuing to be there intervening and engaging on our behalf. Of course its important that they demonstrate the right processes and have the right protective equipment so that they can socially distance themselves so that they can stay safe in the face of Covid-19 risks. But we are out and about and I was briefed about an hour ago by a key member of the policing team and have heard very locally from our district commanders of interventions where we are solving crime where they are arresting people appropriately for criminal behaviours where they are investigating and they are continuing to do that. I am delighted that for anybody who is at risk the 999 service remains a first source if you are immediately at risk. That service is up and maintained by our contact centre and our 101 call number for less immediate risks is at the moment improving. We have been updating that over months and months and it sometimes seems a long time but that’s engaging with people on line and calls are being answered and intelligence gathered so the services are there. And that risk and policing is engaging in the same way that you would normally expect with the added difficulty of the virus that’s impacting us at the moment. So policing is there for you, call them. Services are there and on my website, on the police website, on the council website, on trusted authoritative places you can still find numbers to call and contact points if you have risk vulnerability or the need for services in these strange times.

I: So has Hampshire Constabulary seen an increase in crime during the pandemic?

ML: It changed a little. The first thing to note and to welcome is that some crimes have actually died down. The opportunity for criminals to be out and about is different and some of them are more visible on our empty streets or near empty streets. There are some risks that dial up a little in these circumstances. The scamming and praying on people selling you goods, protective equipment or services that are unsafe and my encouragement to everybody is if you didn’t ask for a service from someone you know be, in the first instance, very careful about things against being scammed for that. We of course want people who are at risk from isolation to be in touch and let us know that. The Chief Constable the other day and Kelly Whiting and others locally who lead in our policing environment and all of our community leaders will be saying please do dial 999 if you’re at risk please do report risk that you are facing, please do look for signposting if you are vulnerable from even trying to contact people where we can give you clues about how to seek help and report your sense of vulnerability so those sorts of actions and reaction. Are crimes up? Not much beyond criminals behaving and choosing a little where they go. I’m concerned I suppose to make sure that parents who are listening and responsible adults who are looking after children know that not being at school gives more hours for people to be vulnerable if their children are on line and to pay attention to that. I’m concerned that actually there’s a vulnerability from health and there are so many wonderful stories from our community of people seeing someone who is vulnerable whether that’s an elderly person isolated, someone with pre-existing health conditions who can’t get out need supporting with shopping and services, can’t get their prescriptions so many people are responding to that in a brilliant way.

I: Whilst we are now using digital technology to work from home and maintain the distance that we are required to do and also looking after ourselves and looking after others which is a key thing, criminals will also be capitalising on that. Is your cyber team on top of that?

ML: There’s a national cyber team, a regional organisation and of course locally too. Whether its in my office we are learning new ways to work away from our office working from home connecting and collaborating together using the technologies and actually many of those allow us to talk to people. Video conferencing enables us to see the people we are talking to to reassure them as they stay at home and isolate for safety for themselves and also to save the lives of the national agenda to ensure the NHS lives is supported to enable to save lives in our hospitals at the critical level and but also to sustain us and so the digital stuff is really good on that. Anyone who is interested in good solid information can come to my own website which is [www.hampshire-pcc.gov.uk](http://www.hampshire-pcc.gov.uk) and if you do a forward slash Coronavirus you will get information that is national assured information locally in context to ensure that you don’t fall victim to fake news which is a risk or to exaggerated claims of things that are false cures or false offerings.

I: So staying on that subject there in or society we have people who are vulnerable, elderly. People in care homes and all that, which can become victims during this time and do you find that the police force in the front line having to support maybe those vulnerable that you didn’t think you didn’t think you did in the past?

ML: Of course it would be right to say would policing support people who have those vulnerabilities yes they will, but it’s also important to recognise the fantastic work that goes on in our County Council, our District and Borough Councils and from all those agencies who intervene with specialist skills. People who are at risk from that isolation as you say that might make them prey to people selling them false goods or scamming them or committing crime against them. That sense of people who are therefore people who may have a greater risk of mental health issues making sure that the support lines and the engagement processes are there for that. To make sure that people can dial into the national support for those who are being cocooned. That’s the most vulnerable people who absolutely need to stay isolated and be supported by the delivery of prescriptions or food and that sort of thing. So it is a time of opportunity and actually so significant a volume of good things from our communities are working and that should be the first thing that we hear but we mustn’t take our eye off looking for someone who has been missed. It might be in your street, or in your building or that you know of from your community. We should be alert to what our young people are getting up to in digital terms where others will be preying on them even if they are very well behaved so those sorts of things are relevant in this digital world.

I: The new legislation to ensure people are following the lockdown rules, did you find the frontline officers have to implement them or is it a question of persuasion first approach

ML: It is absolutely essential that the new powers are used sensitively and for Hampshire constabulary across all of my area, on the Island and cities and across the Hampshire county engaging with people to make sure that they have understood the rules. Encouraging them to adhere to their purpose and educating them about the risks. Hampshire constabulary has been really successful about creating and sustaining the relationship we have with our communities. Of course there are some people who need to be enforced and of course its hard for me to say. I would love it if that wasn’t ……… but there is some enforcement but again the constabulary has an operational plan led from the Chief Constable and all layers of command to ensure that at the front line people actually understand what behaviours must be intervened with. And that includes one or two really appalling things that happen in small numbers but they are awful. The first is to any emergency service including policing, anyone who used Covid-19 as an excuse to spit or bite or attack or threaten people and that’s an enforcement area and the courts are supportive to make sure that that is understood to be vile and unacceptable. And there is enforcement that’s necessary for people who won’t adhere and then they are putting others at risk as well as themselves. But first its well done to the vast majority in our communities who do what they should and for many its difficult and trying and not comfortable in any way to do but well done to them for doing the right thing.

I: Indeed. Are you getting the information that you want to get through to all the people because after all we do live in a very multi-cultural society where our rules and regulations are there to be adhered to and to be followed where some people may not do that and therefore put themselves at risk as well as others.

ML: Do you know there is always room for improvement. I know from our digital connections that we are reaching thousands of people and running a confidence survey with the community at the moment from our website and have had more than 12,000 responses but I am not comfortable that we are reaching everybody and I am sure you will not mind me saying that we were having a conversation earlier about whether you in Unity 101 can help with translation and reach to people where English is not a very helpful language. I was talking to some of our community cohesion officers who have a particular responsibility to focus on reaching hard to reach people and engaging with the and finding how and where they get their information and will continue to do that and if I could ask on your airwaves to anybody that’s listening that can let me know, let my team know, either or both, of there are ways that you know would reach more of your community and in a voice that they can hear and understand so that they can stay safer than they currently might be.

I: OK. I mean it’s as we talk now tomorrow or Thursday Muslim festival of Ramadan starts which actually they would generally gather in mosques and get together, what’s the message you want to send. Is it the same message that applies to everybody?

ML: I want to be really clear that national and locally we want to be sensitive towards customs and the things that are important to our communities but that there is a common message about what keeps us safe at the moment and I know that hospitality and meeting together and being a community is so important for all our communities wherever they should meet and if their faith based or locality based. At the moment I am sad to say but need to say the respecting of not gathering together, of social distancing where gatherings of numbers of people have to be together for an essential reason. All of those rules will apply no less in these circumstances than they have before Ramadan or before Easter festival or before any of the faith festivals that surround us and are usually a delight for family and community engagement so please to everybody do pay attention to staying safe. Do find alternative ways where it’s at all possible to respect your customs and engagement to connect digitally if you can.

I: We are running out of time sir so if I can ask you one last question. What is additional work that the force is doing, or the Commissioners office and the team are doing, to support local people whoever they are in these uncertain times?

ML: The briefing is about doing its normal business of engaging with communities and seeing to intervene where there are risks for my team and for many of the service deliverers. I for example have started a small grant round because sometimes a small sum of money can enable something that is really urgent so there is a scheme that says with five hundred words make me a pitch for something that will keep people safer and in return I can provide up to £500 and I approved earlier today seven of that sort. One was to enable someone who is a volunteer to fill their car with fuel to deliver to people who are isolated, prescriptions and food. Another was for a helpline dealing with suicide risk helpline where having an additional worker with a laptop and software to work from home added another person to people who are in that concern. Whatever ideas people have those are things to do but the big picture for me is sustain those who are providing services at the front line. People who are intervening where there is domestic abuse, people who are providing support to victims, to the vulnerable who need a touch point. Those service providers I want to take the stress off them of any administration or concerns beyond sustaining the services to those who need them.

I: Yes indeed we did talk to Commander Superintendent Kelly Whiting about this last week. OK so thank you very much indeed to Michael Lane, Police and Crime Commissioner serving Hampshire, Portsmouth, isle of Wight and Southampton. Thank you very much indeed for your valuable time sir and wish you safe day to you and your team.

ML: I hope everyone stays safe in Unity 101 and in all our communities. Thank you very much.