

# Our disappearing policeman

Lost presence brings demand for explanation

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From left, Cllr Sue Ferguson, Cllr Harry Hickmott, Malcolm Everett, Chief Inspector Mitchell Fox, PC Steve Baker

A police officer is to be asked to attend a meeting of Tenterden Town Council after concerns were raised about policing.

PC Steve Baker, who was the town's dedicated policeman, was said to have been moved away, a council meeting heard on Monday.

He has not been seen for some time, leading to fears that the town has lost its police presence.

Cllr Sue Ferguson said: "PC Baker is no longer our policeman.

"It is quite worrying, considering that there have been so many burglaries in shops and houses, that we no longer have a dedicated PC.

"I would like the council to follow this up and find out what is going on."

Mayor Cllr Jennifer Crickmore-Porter said it was already in hand to ask for a police presence at the next council meeting, which is

on Monday, February 2, so that questions can be asked.

Former traffic warden Cllr Harry Hickmott was also a support officer at the old town police station and ran the police office in High Street before he retired.

He said: "When I came here, we had an inspector, a sergeant, two double-crew police vehicles, a town officer, front counter staff, a radio operator, six special constables and me as traffic warden. We have lost the lot."

## Charlatan

Referring to police and crime commissioner Ann Barnes and Chief Constable Alan Pughley, Cllr Hickmott added: "Forget this charlatan of a police commissioner. Go to the man at the top and see what can be done."

Concern at the lack of police attendance at burglaries was

raised by a member of the public, Malcolm Everett, of Ingleden Park Road.

He said he was aware of one that was reported at 3.30am. The householder waited until 8.20am when they were told the police had decided at 5.20am not to attend.

Mr Everett said he was aware of another incident where a woman who lived alone returned home at 7.30pm to find she had been burgled. She called the police, who arrived at 2am the following day.

"This is nonsense," said Mr Everett. "We do not have any policing."

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## PC REDEPLOYED TO NEW RURAL TEAM

Ch Insp Mitchell Fox confirmed that PC Steve Baker had been redeployed.

He said: "PC Baker is now part of a new team I've set up to provide greater coverage in our rural areas and those communities most affected by crime and anti-social behaviour.

"Tenterden remains a comparatively low crime area, with an average of less than two crimes every day.

"Every part of the Ashford borough has a named Police Community Support Officer (PCSO), which in Tenterden is Ollie Welch, and in St Michael's Angie Burden. They also work with KCC warden Jo Vos.

"They have built up many

## 'Tenterden remains a comparatively low crime area'

local links and work with the community to keep crime down. Tenterden is also served by police officers from the local district policing team and sometimes by volunteer police officers from the special constabulary.

"As district commander, I was given greater control of where my officers are deployed when the new policing model was launched in Kent in June. My

priority is to ensure we provide the best possible service to the public by using our officers where they are most needed."

A police spokesman said that officers were investigating a break-in at Ingleden Park Road that happened between 5.30pm and 8pm on Wednesday, December 3.

He said: "It was reported to us at 8.40pm after the offender(s) had gone, and a police officer attended at around 2am, after checking with the resident that they were happy for him to attend at that time."

Anyone with information is asked to contact Det Con Chris Price on 101 quoting crime reference ZY/39487/14.