

# Communities are no longer Poles apart

**L**EADERS of the Polish community and Cambridgeshire's chief constable Julie Spence are hoping to forge closer links after a successful summit.

The meeting in Cambridge was called after Poles expressed concern Mrs Spence's comments about the pressures immigration put on her force could trigger hate attacks.

She has repeatedly asked for more money to meet the costs of tackling new sorts of crime, such as labour and sex trafficking, and translation budgets.

And although the meeting ended in another call for increased Government funding, both sides said their discussions had been positive.

Mrs Spence said: "I know that the vast majority of Polish people in Cambridgeshire are good, honest law-abiding people, and we very much welcome their presence. I want to ensure their safety and wellbeing as well as upholding the law."

"The Polish community in Cambridgeshire is held in high esteem – our cultures and history are closely intertwined, having

look forward to building ever stronger relationships in the future.

"Our main message to MPs and the Government has been that with a rapidly growing population, the police – and other public services – need more resources to meet the new demands we face."

Mrs Spence, accompanied by sector commander for Cambridge, Chief Superintendent Rob Needle, also moved to reassure the Poles attending she did not believe there was a knife culture among the county's Eastern European population.

Tom Wlodarski, a committee member of the city's East of England Polish Community Organisation (EEOCO), had asked for the meeting after claiming Mrs Spence's comments were at risk of unfairly pushing Poles out and raising tensions.

He said he had spoken strongly about his concerns at the meeting, in the Polish Club on Chesterton Road this week.

Mr Wlodarski, from St Ives, said: "We clearly expressed our worries about how Mrs Spence's opinions potentially became the excuse for raising tensions inside both host and Polish communities. I hope it was an eye-opening meeting for everyone."

"I do appreciate the efforts the constabulary have put into dealing with the increase of crimes based on the influx of a huge number of people into the county."

"I would be blind if I did not see that fact."

"We are already planning some actions which will surely be useful in building and maintaining good relationship, as well as helping police to get

**The influx of Eastern European migrants to Cambridgeshire created expensive challenges for the county's authorities. But now police officers and the Polish community are looking forward to a new chapter in their relationship. CHRIS HAVERGAL reports.**



**BETTER UNDERSTANDING:** From left, Marta Maj and Tom Wlodarski. Picture: Richard Patterson 496193.

proper information to the migrant communities."

EEOCO chairman Marta Maj, who was also at the meeting, said: "Mrs Spence was receptive to our concerns."

"She actively listened to our suggestions about how we can work in partnership with the police and other agencies to ensure better understanding between both communities."

Mrs Spence's requests for more money came as her force announced it had managed to slash more than £250,000 from translation budgets in just one year.

The cost of

employing specialist staff had soared since European expansion brought thousands of migrants to the region, topping £800,000 in 2006/7.

But last year the figure dropped to £540,000, with the employment of a number of multilingual community support officers.

chris.havergal@cambridge-news.co.uk

**STRONGER RELATIONSHIP:** Chief Constable Julie Spence.



*"The Polish community in the county is held in high esteem – our cultures and history are closely intertwined, having shared many difficult periods of history"*

**Chief Constable Julie Spence**