

Bogus rape claim penalty slammed

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But yesterday police said that the maximum fine they could impose without taking costly court action was an £80 fixed penalty notice.

Simon Burns, who represents West Chelmsford, made his comments after it emerged the 18-year-old had told police she had been raped on June 12.

A 24-year-old Chelmsford man was arrested on suspicion of the crime and held in custody for 16 hours.

Meanwhile a number of officers investigated the allegation, including two scenes of crime detectives and three doctors.

However, following several days of investigation the allegation proved to be malicious and the teenager, who lives in Chelmsford but has not been named by police, was issued with the £80 fixed penalty notice for wasting police time.

Yesterday Mr Burns said: “Any malicious allegations, whether for the serious crime of rape or something not so serious, are reprehensible.

“However, it does seem to me, given the amount of police time that could have been spent investigating genuine offences and the appalling impact on the individual falsely accused, that to be able to walk away with an £80 fine seems to be rather lenient punishment.

“It does not appear to have much value as a deterrent to other people who might behave in this reprehensible way.”

A spokesman for Essex Police confirmed yesterday that an £80 fixed penalty ticket was the maximum punishment available without taking court action.

“The £80 fixed penalty notice is the way the home office asks police officers to deal with such offences,” he said.

Dc Gary Robinson said: “This has wasted valuable police time and detracted from detecting genuine cases of rape and sexual assault.

“Any victim of a sexual assault should not hesitate to contact the police directly or if they feel unable to do so we can be contacted via a third party such as Rape Crisis.

“All allegations will be investigated thoroughly.”

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