

County Council



24 November 2016

Written Questions for the Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable

Question from Mr R Stuchbury, County Councillor for Buckingham West

Police resources continue to be stretched alarmingly, with the result that “Neighbourhood Policing” is now something of a misnomer. Not too many years ago, it meant regular patrols by our Neighbourhood Team, who were known to Buckingham residents and, because they knew the area and its people well, regularly gathered useful intelligence. Things are far different now, with the Buckingham “Neighbourhood” ever-widening, and a police presence “on the ground” becoming increasingly rare.

Do the Police & Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable agree that, given the ever-stretching of available resources preventing dedicated locality policing, it is time to drop the “Neighbourhood Policing” tag and, if so, would they agree that an appropriate replacement tag might be “occasional locality policing”?

Answer:

Neighbourhood Policing remains very much at the heart of Thames Valley Police. Working with our communities and partners to help solve local problems will continue to be the focus of our neighbourhood policing teams.

Buckingham Town and District continues to be staffed at full strength with 1 Sergeant, Emily Dover, 8 PCs and 4 PCSOs. This team covers both Buckingham Town itself and the surrounding District and villages. Year to date recorded crime in Buckingham Town & District has reduced by 13% compared with last year.

Whilst this year, Buckingham Town saw the closure of the police front counter in the Old Gaol, Market Hill we continue to have a 24/7 policing base on the Swan Industrial Estate in Buckingham. We are currently working with Bucks County Council to explore co-location opportunities within Buckingham Town Library, which is developing as a community hub. Working with the County Council we have already established an office and engagement point in Wendover Library and wish to continue to develop other opportunities such as in the Buckingham Town Library as an example. Across the County we still have dedicated local neighbourhood policing teams in Aylesbury, Buckingham, Waddesdon, Wing and Winslow.

Thames Valley Police is and will continue to be committed to deliver local neighbourhood policing. The policing landscape continues to change with the emergence of new and complex crimes such as cyber-crime and modern slavery, the growth of others, including sexual offences, and the ongoing financial uncertainty facing the police and partner services. We need to work together to build stronger more resilient communities. We are one community and I encourage residents,

business and our partners to play their part in local problem solving and protecting themselves and others from becoming victims of crime .We need to be a modern police force which meets the needs of our communities. Working with our communities to help solve local problems will continue to be the focus of the neighbourhood policing teams, with greater emphasis on tackling the causes of most harm, risk and demand. We very much want to work with communities, partners and businesses to build that community resilience. By working together the police, public, voluntary and commercial sectors will help strengthen community resilience.

Whilst Thames Valley Police hasn't locally reduced the size of the neighbourhood policing team in recent years we are currently reviewing our structures and processes in how we deliver Neighbourhood Policing. We will have named contacts for every community and then problem solving teams that will work closely with our local partners to deliver a more collaborative style of problem solving together with our communities.

Question from Mr W Whyte, County Councillor for Buckingham East

As chairman of my local area forum in Buckingham and North Bucks, I have a number of parishes with concerns about speeding. I have established a Community Speedwatch scheme which is helpful to a certain extent, but the Local Area Forum would desperately like the ability to put forward location suggestions for the mobile speed van to visit.

Would the PCC agree with me that a more versatile deployment of the van, responding to County Councillor and parish concerns, would be beneficial, rather than it being used regularly on a limited range of sites, and if it proves that speed is not an issue but a perception at some locations, that will be a useful outcome too.

Answer:

Speeding is one of the main contributory factors to Killed or Seriously Injured collisions (KSIs). Safety Cameras are an important option in our fight to reduce the volume of those KSIs and are used on a daily basis to tackle that risk and provide much needed enforcement. Speed enforcement is determined either by a high history of collisions or because of community concerns.

We work in partnership with local authorities to improve road safety. They deploy speed survey equipment to establish vehicle speeds and this can either validate concerns about vehicle speeds or negate them. If the area is highlighted due to community concerns then we will generally work with volunteers as part of community speedwatch schemes or with the neighbourhood teams.

This joint approach uses our finite resources in the most appropriate manner and allows us to focus on where there is the highest risk. We have one of the widest enforcement site networks in the country. We allocate the safety cameras (both fixed and mobile) flexibly across these sites to tackle risk. For this reason we do not have plans to change our deployment methods.

If there are local concerns then the Neighbourhood team is the appropriate department for the parishes to link in to. This will allow identification of local needs and for action and engagement to follow.

Question from Ms R Vigor-Hedderly, County Councillor for Iver

The Green Yard policy was a trial in Iver back in 2014. This policy was extremely successful, by protecting the welfare of the equine, the motorist and of course has demonstrate a huge saving in tax payers money, by allowing police officers to deal with stray and abandoned horses on the highway within a matter of a couple of hours. It also limits the liability to the police....

Can you assure me that Thames Valley Police are all trained by the horse trust in Speen and are aware of this ongoing policy which I understand has been rolled out fully across the Force.

Answer:

Not all police officers are trained in the principles of Green Yard Scheme. However, the Thames Valley Police officers who are trained, have received the training from The Horse Trust at Speen.

Not all TVP staff/officers are aware of the scheme, but officers local to Horse Trust have a greater knowledge and understanding of the scheme. There are currently no police training sessions scheduled. This seems to be as a result of Highways England embarking on large scale training. Highways England's goal is to train 1000 members of their staff in the next 24 months.

Horse Trust are currently running 6 training sessions a month. Each ½ day session has 7-8 students. With regards to Thames Valley officers who are trained, the vast majority are based in Marlow, Wycombe, Taplow and Princes Risborough.

Question from Mr N Brown, County Councillor for Chess Valley

Attending a British Legion remembrance event at the Chesham War Memorial on Friday 11th November, I was extremely saddened to hear that the Police had withdrawn their support for the event. Remembrance events such as this, held across the country, are a fundamental element of community life and remain one of the few opportunities for all parts of society to come together and demonstrate their unity. As such, I feel strongly that the Police Force should be setting an example.

Can the Police and Crime Commissioner confirm whether the Force has indeed adopted a policy of no longer supporting remembrance events and if this is the case, could he explain the justification for doing so?

Answer:

Remembrance Day more often than not falls on a different day in the week to Remembrance Sunday, which is the traditional day for parades and town services. Remembrance Day has traditionally seen small personal events with a 2 minute silence included which do not require police support; however we have teams of planners who link into Local Police Areas (LPAs) and organisers to make sure we

are available if required. This is normally through local neighbourhood teams, if necessary, but these are not normally requested.

Remembrance Sunday requires the largest planning and support programme of and we reviewed and supported over a hundred events and parades. These are the events when local police teams are generally in attendance.

We do have a full security operation in place for both Remembrance Day and Sunday that monitors any issues across the force.