

Report to the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel

Title: Themed Item – Roads Policing

Date: 7 April 2017

Author: Clare Gray, Police and Crime
Panel Scrutiny Officer, Thames
Valley Police & Crime Panel



Background

1. The reason for this item is to look at the PCC's performance on roads policing and how the Chief Constable is being held to account for the Joint Operations Unit with Hampshire Constabulary.

Thames Valley

2. The PCC in his draft new Plan has stated that roads' policing is a core part of policing. Thames Valley has the largest motorway network of any police force, and major trunk roads, such as the A34, also cross the area. Recent fatal accidents involving the use of handheld mobile telephones in cars and other distractions highlight the importance of prevention and the need for improvements in road safety. The Youth Survey conducted by the Office of the PCC says that 23% of young people worry about being hit by a car. His key aim is 'police and partners address road safety concerns, especially amongst vulnerable groups such as younger people, cyclists and pedestrians'. Another related key aim is to encourage accelerated up-take of new technology in order to prevent, reduce and detect crime.
3. Thames Valley Police's Roads Policing Unit (RPU) is a collaborated unit with Hampshire Constabulary. This makes it (combined) the second largest RPU in the country, consisting of 207 police officers in the Thames Valley Police side of the unit.
4. Its resources are focussed on delivering the national Roads Policing Strategy, which aims to:
 - Reduce road casualties
 - Deny criminals use of the roads by enforcing the law
 - Tackle the threat of terrorism
 - Reduce anti-social use of vehicles
 - Enhance public confidence and reassurance by patrolling the roads
5. The unit is made up of patrol officers, a proactive team (targeted at criminals using the roads), a Road Death Investigation Team, the Forensic Collision Investigation Unit , the

safety camera team, traffic management officers , the Fixed Penalty Support Unit, and is supported by a team of volunteers and Special Constables.

6. The team focuses its enforcement activity on the 'fatal four' offences of speed, distraction (including mobile phones), seatbelts and drink/drug driving as research shows that activity here is the most likely to reduce road death. Within national guidelines, a range of driver education courses are offered where appropriate as an alternative to prosecution. These are delivered in partnership with AA Drivetech. In addition, they work with colleagues from South Central Ambulance Service, the Fire & Rescue Services and Local Authorities to deliver the innovative and powerful 'Safe Drive – Stay Alive' presentation to over 15,000 young people a year across the region.

<http://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/aboutus/aboutus-depts/aboutus-depts-op/aboutus-depts-roads.htm>

7. Information from the recent budget report and a press article includes the following information on roads policing:-

- A review of the shift patterns within the Joint HC/TVP Roads Policing unit are estimated to reduce the establishment required for the unit, which will realise savings to TVP of £0.6m (budget papers)
- The Capital Budget includes £0.450 for the Safer Roads Partnership
- A press article in March 2016 referred to TVP upgrading all fixed speed cameras in the Force area to be replaced with more advance digital technology. The cameras will be upgraded at priority sites. Twenty cameras and site upgrades would be completed that year (2016) with a further ten cameras to be upgraded in 2017. The overall programme would last five years. The Capital Monitoring 2016/16 report refers to this as the Safer Roads Scheme and road safety camera upgrades are funded from safety camera income. The full budget for the year was up to £2.139m, with £0.602m currently spent and further commitments of £0.678m identified.

<http://www.getbucks.co.uk/news/local-news/fixd-speed-camera-upgrade-begins-11027941>

8. One of the issues raised by a member of the public to the Panel was whether the PCC should have a Deployment Strategy for speed cameras. Some PCCs do have these in place which explain their strategy in where cameras are deployed.

<http://www.suffolk-pcc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/The-Operational-Approach-to-Speed-Enforcement.pdf>

<http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/docs/pdf/l/18339258/speed-management.pdf>

National information

9. The National Police Chiefs' Council has published a five year strategy on policing the roads in partnership. Points to note in the Strategy are as follows:-

- Prioritising enforcement and education on the fatal four offences
- No one single agency can deliver the reductions in casualties therefore it is important to look at greater levels of effective partnership working

10. A Police Foundation Report 'Is Roads Policing taken seriously enough'. Points to note are as follows:-

- Everyone is a potential killer – there is a distinction in people's minds between illegal behaviour and foolish mistakes, most people think they are in the second category and this to some extent has been the stance of policy makers. It was felt

that policy might do better to focus on the act rather than the perpetrator. A Ministry of Justice consultation which ended at the beginning of February was looking at the distinction between careless and dangerous driving and the level of maximum penalties.

- Roads policing should not be viewed in a vacuum and there should be better communication between officers involved in roads and non-roads policing
- Safer Roads Partnerships and Crime Reduction Partnerships need to work together to better identify risky behaviour and prevent accidents and other serious road-related incidents.
- Where should the focus lie – risk management, investigation of road accidents and/or prevention. Resource strapped police forces are not always able to employ forensic collision investigators. There was a suggestion that there should be a national unit for collision investigation which would enable officers to share knowledge and best practice. There was also another suggestion that the police could further improve roads policing by promoting more partnership based prevention.
- Due to the steady decline in accidents there was a concern that roads policing may be a victim of its own success and that PCCs may not see this as one of their key priorities. Whilst there has been a recommendation to have a national unit (see paragraph above) there has been discussion as to whether roads policing should be a specialist capability of the police but the common view is that it is core to routine local policing.
- Another recommendation was that it might help if people understood better how finances raised by cameras were used and road safety initiatives should be more widely publicised.

11. In terms of resourcing the RAC has produced a report which states that the majority of forces record year on year fall in full time roads policing officers. There are 1,437 fewer designated officers in 2015 than in 2010, which is a 27% reduction. A report to the Transport Select Committee called on the Government to support police forces in maintaining the number of specialist officers on the roads. It questions whether forces are increasingly turning to technology to enforce the law when the majority of motoring laws rely on a physical officer present to apply the law. Enforcement of the law and the behaviour of other motorists were two major concerns flagged by motorists. The Transport Select Committee warned that police cuts would stop some offences being detected.

12. Thames Valley was not in the ten top forces in reduction of roads policing officers. There was a reduction of 24 officers between 2010 to 2015 with 1 extra officer for 2014 to 2015 so there are 205 officers in total. A recent press article states that Hampshire Constabulary is moving forward with its plans to combine its armed response officers and roads policing teams and that the Isle of Wight will lose its two dedicated policing officers.

<http://iwradio.co.uk/2017/02/16/police-and-crime-commissioner-defends-decision-to-merge-isle-of-wights-roads-policing-and-armed-response-units/>

<http://www.rac.co.uk/drive/news/rac-news/roads-policing-cut-will-dismay-drivers/>

<http://www.mynewsdesk.com/uk/rac/pressreleases/2015-sees-further-fall-in-numbers-of-dedicated-roads-policing-officers-1414666>

13. The number of specialist roads policing officers in the country fell from 7,104 to 4,356 between 2005 and 2014. Whilst, the total number of offences detected on roads in England and Wales went from 4.3 million in 2004 to 1.5 million in 2014, the number of

offences resulting in a fatality - which will always be recorded - did not fall. But the Home Office said in response to the Transport Select Committee "Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary has been clear that there is no link between police resources and crime levels and effective roads policing is dependent on a range of factors, from better driver awareness to increased use of fixed penalty notices. It said the enforcement of traffic offences was an operational matter for the police. According to Home Office research, traffic police officers spend about 26% of their time dealing with traffic incidents and only 5% of time on traffic related checks.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-35805131>

14. Just looking briefly at what other PCCs are doing Northamptonshire PCC announced a road safety initiative in 2016 to help curb the number of injuries and fatalities experienced. The initiative will see the force invest in new technology such as mobile average speed camera systems and new camera vans equipped with night time enforcement systems whilst working more closely with parish councils to address the dangers caused by speeding and inconsiderate drivers. The PCC is also working with the County Council to make rural roads safer. Suffolk PCC has also introduced a new roads policing team.

<http://www.northantspcc.org.uk/pcc-to-announce-major-new-road-safety-initiative/>

http://www.eadt.co.uk/news/new_roads_police_unit_to_target_inconsiderate_idiots_who_risk_lives_on_suffolk_roads_1_4449764

15. Project partners from Birmingham City Council (BCC), Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC), West Midlands Police (WMP) and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner have decided to adopt a system using average speed cameras because historically compliance with speed limits is far better than with mobile or fixed-point cameras.

<https://www.west-midlands.police.uk/latest-news/news.aspx?Id=4635>

Hertfordshire have also used average speed cameras to combat illegal racing and anti-social driving.

<http://www.hertscommissioner.org/2016-06-pccs-first-successful-road-safety-fund-bid-takes-shape-on-broxbournes-a10>

There is cause for optimism about the overall collision reduction benefits of average speed cameras. Taking account of overall trends, permanent average speed camera sites were found to, on average, reduce injury collisions, particularly those of highest severity.

http://www.racfoundation.org/assets/rac_foundation/content/downloadables/Average_speed_camera_effectiveness_Owen_Ursachi_Allsop_September_2016.pdf

16. West Sussex County Council and the Fire Service have developed a Local Road Safety Framework which sets out their safety targets and the actions they are taking to make the roads safer. It also compliments the national context set out by the Department for Transport statement on Road Safety (December 2015).

<https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-plans-and-policies/roads-and-travel-plans-and-policies/road-safety-framework-2016-2026/>

Other aspects of road safety

- Road policing impacts on all critical areas of police business – reducing road casualties, disrupting criminality, countering terrorism, anti-social driving, and patrolling the roads. Road policing is well positioned to deliver these outcomes, as the road network is essential for the movement of criminals.
- Cyclists believe roads policing should be given a much higher priority: there should be more and better trained road traffic police; road collisions should be thoroughly investigated and not just fobbed off as unfortunate 'accidents'; incident reporting

systems should be better designed; and all police forces should establish collision and near miss reporting systems. The link below shows an initiative by West Midlands for zero tolerance approach to close-passes of cyclists.

<http://www.bikebiz.com/news/read/close-pass-zero-tolerance-stance-is-best-ever-road-safety-initiative/020087>

<http://www.cyclinguk.org/police-and-crime-commissioners-should-prioritise-road-safety>

http://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/15169407.120m_cycling_vision_unveiled_to_get_county_riding_like_the_Dutch/

- Below is an article on bus lane cameras which make Councils £31m per year
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-38957371>
- Motorcyclists as vulnerable users have a high number of casualties when weighted against the number of these types of vehicles on the road – powered two wheel vehicles are made up of 1% of road users but account for 21% of fatalities.
- A recent evaluation of 20pmh zones in Manchester has shown them to be ineffective. Officers have now carried out a long-term evaluation of the first phase - finding it has cut speeds by just 0.7mph. A report going before the Council admits there has only been a ‘marginal’ change, in line with other towns and cities that have introduced the measure.
<http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/20mph-speed-limit-manchester-stopped-12706663>
- Speed awareness courses
“Ministers will launch a crackdown on speed awareness classes after concerns that they do not change drivers’ habits and are a way for police forces to make money. Legislation drawn up by the Department for Transport will ban drivers from repeating the training, which is offered to motorists who are caught speeding. They pay to complete a course, instead of being fined and receiving penalty points on their licence. The option is popular because penalty points can significantly increase the price of your car insurance. Ministers will also set a cap on fees charged for completing the training and will insist that any money made from the system is invested in promoting road safety”
<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/ministers-slam-brakes-on-costly-anti-speeding-courses-k57l23m6j>
- A major project was carried out for Thames Valley Police and the Hampshire Constabulary into the effectiveness of a range of roads policing strategies. It identified that there are a number of gaps in the evidence as to the impact of the National Speed Awareness Course and it is "broadly unknown" in terms of its effect on repeat speed offences and future collisions. This recent TRL study for Thames Valley Police and Hampshire Constabulary is one of very few research projects which have tried to quantify the benefit of high profile traffic policing and targeted campaigns in the UK. The report found that more than 460 fewer road users would be either killed or seriously injured each year if drivers drove more safely
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-36594584>
http://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/acc/effectiveness_of_roads_policing_ppr371.pdf

RECOMMENDATIONS for consideration:-

- **Form a Safer Roads Partnership for Thames Valley**
- **Consider the benefits of having a published Thames Valley wide Road Safety Framework which could include a deployment strategy for speed cameras**
- **Introduce average speed cameras in the Thames Valley**
- **Review number of road safety enforcement officers/constables across the Thames Valley**

Other background information

Reduction in officers

<http://www.essexlive.news/essex-police-officers-fear-lack-traffic-cops/story-29131010-detail/story.html>

<http://www.brake.org.uk/brake-blog/entry/pccs-roadsplicing>

<http://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/Document-Library/TERM-ONE/Newslettersbriefings/Website-version-PPC-Newsletter-6PP-AW.pdf>

Thames Valley staff commended for dealing with A34 crash

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-38661125>

Fewer roads police but more work than over

<http://www.polfed.org/newsroom/3950.aspx>

<http://www.brake.org.uk/events/15-facts-a-resources/facts/493-road-policing-in-the-uk>

<http://www.roadsafetygb.org.uk/news/5082.html>