

Report to the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel

Title: Topical issues

Date: 16 June 2017

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



Cyber Crime Event

This event was hosted by Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel and led by Buckinghamshire County Council. The reason for this event was that digital crime does not respect geographic boundaries. Thus, having a consistent approach towards tackling it and protecting people is considered a helpful way forward.

This session was timed to support the PCC and CSPs in developing the action plans for their 3 year Community Safety Partnership Plans and the 5 year Police & Crime Plan.

The day sought to focus primarily on cyber-enabled (rather than dependent) crime. It was structured to start with a National/Regional context, followed by a Thames Valley perspective in the morning. The afternoon enabled CSPs to identify unique challenges to their local area and areas of shared opportunity with other CSPs. There was an opportunity to focus on how to identify what “good” might look like.

Feedback form summary

- Over 70 people attended the conference and 85% of attendees filled out an evaluation form. Attendance and interest in the event was good, with representation from almost every Community Safety Partnership area across the Thames Valley. Representations across sectors was good including public health, schools and colleges, charities, the National Crime Agency, local authorities, probation & CRC, police, fire service, the Police & Crime Panel (elected members) and the Office of the PCC
- Provided great opportunity to understand the current picture of cybercrime right across the partnership
- Presentations were interesting and engaging
- The Police & Crime Commissioner commented that he didn't believe any other PCC area had done something collaborative like this

Purpose and Outcomes

CSPs across the Thames Valley were encouraged to identify what kinds of digital / cyber issues they face locally so that they could share resource and strategy over the next three years. The desired tangible outcomes from this day were:

1. All CSPs who are represented are able to identify something within the cybercrime agenda that is of direct relevance to them (i.e. a crime type such as fraud or a target group / audience such as young people)
2. A decision on what can be considered a common approach to cyber – i.e. is it about reducing victimisation more than tackling offending? Agree across CSPs about what is needed such as:
 - shared resources to raise awareness
 - common language on the key vulnerable groups
 - the crime types that have been “cyber-enabled” which are of interest to CSPs
 - key agencies / services that would add value to supporting this agenda
3. A matrix table (such as has been used in past TVP Force Strategic Assessments) which display the subsets of cybercrime (especially cyber enabled) and how each CSP’s priority / demand lines up with those crime types
4. The start of a list of ways to measure success that would be robust enough to stand up to scrutiny (this could be because they are measurable / SMART or because they evidence value for money etc)
5. An understanding of the roles of key partners (to reduce duplication, enable sharing of expertise and resource etc)

A further meeting has been arranged for 12 June to discuss moving forward with the above.

Taxi Licensing Event

Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel held a themed meeting on taxi licensing with Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils and two key recommendations that were made included the possibility of standardising policies and the need for a regional database because of safeguarding issues. Following this Bucks Safeguarding Board make similar recommendations following a Serious Case Review. As a result of this it was agreed that it would be really helpful to organise a Thames Valley wide event (including Home Counties) to consider these issues.

Purpose and Outcomes

The purpose of the event is to discuss whether it is possible:-

- For Authorities across the Region to agree to standardise policies on taxi licensing
- To have a regional database that links in with the police
- The main outcome being that safeguarding is improved for all passengers

An event was held on 19 May 2017 at Kassam Stadium Oxford and 50 people attended from authorities across the Thames Valley including representation from Department from Business, Energy, Industrial Strategy, Private Hire Reform Campaign, Thames Valley Police and Authorities from Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire.

The day included presentations from the following people:-

- Deputy PCC on the local view
- Rebecca Johnson on the national view – Adviser (Regulation) Local Government Association
- Charles Holland on the legal view – ftb Chambers (including Luton Borough Council on flexible warranting)

- Nathan March, Chiltern and South Bucks District Council Licensing Manager on the safeguarding view (including Bucks Safeguarding Board Serious Case Review and Home to School Transport)
- Gary Pettengell – ecins database
- Short workshop discussion during lunch on addressing outcomes outlined at start.

The outcome from the day was that 16 people signed up to join a Thames Valley wide Working Group on taking this work forward which also included representatives from Bedford and Hertfordshire. The Deputy PCC also reported that they would pay for a one year pilot for a single point of contact for taxi licensing at Thames Valley Police, with a view for local authorities to pay for this after a year.

The LGA is commissioning a national register of taxi/PHV licence revocations and refusals, to be hosted by the National Anti-Fraud Network. This is an initiative that has developed quite quickly; following initial conversations the LGA had with some of our members about what could be done in this area, they were able to bring together conversations already taking place between NAFN and two groups of authorities with the result that they are in a position to kick-start something with a view to having something in place by the end of the year.

From an LGA perspective this is a really positive development which they hope councils will support and make use of. Their hope is that this single national register would replace the regional arrangements that have developed around refusals / revocations, although this national register should not in any way stop other good work around regional information sharing more widely. A regional database would complement this as a multi-agency tool.

Representatives asked for the Working Group to focus on the following issues:-

1. National/regional database
2. Police Liaison Officer - TVP have emphasised the importance of standardising where possible otherwise local differences will reduce the effectiveness of the SPOC
3. A common approach to taxi licensing including:-
 - Standardised minimum requirements e.g compulsory CSE training, driver standards and conditions (make the public aware of levels of training to give confidence to users)
 - Agreements between different authorities area to be able to enforce 'out of area' taxis and drivers but retain flexible local decision making – simple convictions policy
 - Regular working group to ensure that good practices continue – is there a national group looking at these issues ?
 - Address loopholes in legislation with engagement from police, local authorities and taxi drivers – legislative reform and national standards are key. LGA, PCCs and Local Authorities should continue to push the agenda.
 - Implications of General Data Protection Regulations which will come into force May 2018 and could have major implications for data protection – collection, retention and sharing.
 - Sharing information – it is recognised that it is difficult to disclose information while police investigations are on-going but it would be helpful to look at ways information could be shared to protect the public.
 - Sharing resources through the knowledge hub
 - Liaison with other groups outside the Thames Valley such as Transport for London
 - Using Deregulation Act to provide regional services/Uber
 - Policy templates

- Use of technology
- Review byelaws
- PSV's

A representative said the following:-

'The event was really informative thanks. It struck me that the passion and urgency to work together was there in the room, but there were some officers who were not able to contribute. The Public Safety part of this cannot be underestimated. We all need to do something.'

PCC Policy Planning and Performance meeting (July 2017) includes the following:-

2016/17 Year end reports: Final accounts, PCC Annual Report, TVP Delivery Plan, Treasury management annual report, Annual Governance Statement, Chiltern Transport Consortium Annual Report, Custody Visiting

2017/18 monitoring reports (headline information only): TVP Delivery Plan, OPCC Delivery Plan, Revenue Budget monitoring, Capital Budget monitoring, Treasury management,

Planning reports Corporate Governance Framework, The People Agenda

Regular update reports (if required): Minutes of the CIE Panel, HMIC reports, Decisions taken under delegated powers

Recent publications/events and media interest

Recent terror attacks

http://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/15332436.Muslim_community_in_Oxfordshire_urged_to_root_out_extremists/?ref=ebln

<http://www.getbucks.co.uk/news/local-news/manchester-terror-attack-thames-valley-13081026>

<https://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/news/general/national-terrorism-threat-level-raised-critical/>

<http://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/counterterror-police-hold-major-training-exercise-on-river-thames-to-prepare-for-tourist-boat-hijack-a3493546.html>

Crime statistics for the Thames Valley

<https://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/news/general/crime-statistics-thames-valley-police-201617/>

The latest figures show that there were 138,710 crimes reported across Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire from 1 April 2016 until 31 March 2017.

This is a 7.2% increase to the previous year (2015/16) where there were 129,449 reported crimes within the same time frame. The increase is reflected nationally (ONS Crime Survey of England and Wales¹), and is largely attributed to improvements in compliance with National Crime Recording Standards, following recommendations made by HMIC in 2014.

Overall crime levels in Thames Valley still remain low compared with five and ten years ago. There were 66,976 fewer crimes recorded in this timeframe compared with five years ago (205,686), and 8,357 fewer recorded offences compared with ten years ago (147,067).

The HMIC's latest PEEL assessment² rated Thames Valley Police as good across all areas of policing (effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy), and victim satisfaction remains high at 88%, compared with the national average of 84%.

Following the release of the figures, Deputy Chief Constable John Campbell, said: “The reasons for variations in crime data from year to year can be complex. As often is the case some of this is down to changes in crime recording and how we capture that information. However there are some increases in crime types, as well as increased victim confidence in reporting certain types of offences.

Breakdown of the main crime categories:

The 2016/17 annual crime statistics for Thames Valley Police show:

- Recorded offences of **violence against the person** offences have risen by 7.9%. This category is broken down into four subcategories: homicide, violence with injury (which includes causing death or serious injury by dangerous or careless driving), violence without injury and harassment. **Homicide** has increased by 5.6% (18 reports in 2015/16 and 19 reports in 2016/17). Of the 19 recorded offences, six people have been imprisoned, nine people have been charged and two people have been arrested. Three of the recorded homicides are in relation to the deaths of three men at Didcot Power Station in February 2016. Please see notes to editors for further details⁴. **Violence with injury** offences have increased by 5.8% and **violence without injury** has increased by 8.8%. **Harassment** offences have increased by 12.7% (2,633 reports in 2015/16 and 2,968 reports in 2016/17). The latest ONS figures show that Thames Valley is the fifth lowest in the country for violent crime (12.8 offences per 1000 population, compared with the national average of 19.3 per 1000 of the population).
- **Sexual offences** have increased by 4.2% over the past year (4,412 crimes in total). Recorded offences of **rape** have increased by 9.3% and **non-rape sexual offences** have increased by 1.6%. This rise is in line with a national increase and we believe it indicates a positive reflection of an increasing confidence of victims, who are coming forward to report offences, many of which are non-recent. This increase has been influenced by a number of high-profile historic cases in the media. Of the 4,412 offences that were recorded over this time period³, 13.1% of all non-rape sexual offences and 23.2% of all recorded rapes were reported to have taken place over five years ago. Whilst this increase in sexual offences is lower than in previous years, we still expect it to rise, and continue to work alongside partner agencies to encourage victims of rape and sexual abuse to come forward.
- **Robbery of Personal Property** has increased by 10.4%, however robbery of business property offences have decreased by 7.7%. Despite an overall increase of 7.6%, this is still a 56.2% decrease compared with 2006/07 figures and a 41.1% decrease compared to 2011/12 recorded offences.
- **Burglary** has increased by 9.1%. A proportion of these offences have taken place in specific areas within the Thames Valley. As a consequence, significant police activity and crime prevention strategies have taken place in these areas over the past few months in order to target these offences.
- **Vehicle crime** has increased by 10.6%. Similar to burglary, a proportion of these offences have taken place in specific areas within the Thames Valley. Proactive crime prevention activity has taken place within these areas to deter offenders and prevent offences.
- **Arson** has increased by 19.9%, with certain increases in specific areas. The increase is largely thought to be due to improvements in recording practices, combined with a greater willingness from the public to report offences. A large proportion of these offences are lower-level, such as bins being set alight.

- **Trafficking of drugs** offences have increased by 28.1%, which can be largely attributed to an increase in proactive police enforcement i.e. warrants and pre-planned operations to combat illegal drug activity across county lines. This has been a particular focus of Stronghold, which is Thames Valley Police's campaign to encourage working with communities to tackle serious and organised crime.
- **Possession of weapons** offences have increased by 19.8%. Similar to trafficking of drugs offences, possession of weapons are only recorded as a crime when officers catch someone committing the offence, unlike most offences where a crime is recorded on what the victim reports. Therefore an increase in these figures normally indicates an increase in police activity as opposed to an increase in actual crime. This increase is reflected nationally.
- **Hate crime** has increased overall by 8.1%. **Racially or religiously aggravated crime** has increased by 10%, **racist incidents** have increased by 11.2% and **religious incidents** have increased by 10.1%. **Homophobic crimes** have increased by 7.9%, **transphobic incidents** have decreased by 16.7% and **disability incidents** have decreased by 17.4%. Throughout the past year, officers and staff supported National Hate Crime Awareness Week 2016 and we had our own campaign to raise awareness and understanding of hate crime within the force and in our communities. While there has been an overall increase in recorded hate crimes, we believe that many incidents still remain unreported. Thames Valley Police expect to see further increases within this category, as victims continue to gain confidence in coming forward and reporting offences to the police.
- **Domestic abuse** has risen by 3.3%. Domestic abuse is a priority for the force, and we continue to work closely with partner agencies to intervene at the earliest point. The #BehindClosedDoors campaign helped to raise awareness of domestic abuse and aimed to encourage victims not to suffer in silence.

The full crime summary, including a breakdown of Local Policing Area (LPA) statistics, can be viewed here: <https://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/about-us/publications-and-documents/performance-figures/>

Roads Policing

<http://www.getbucks.co.uk/news/local-news/hampshire-thames-valley-police-launch-13122394>

Together with Hampshire Police, local officers will be conducting targeted operations during the day and night to deter and detect drink drivers from June 1 to June 30. Despite the number being reduced over the past 50 years, the Department for Transport has confirmed a six-fold increase in the number of drug-drivers caught since March 2015.