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SERIOUS ORGANISED CRIME AND TERRORISM:

Improving the local response

Under the 2011 Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act, PCCs are required to have regard to the Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR) issued by the Home Secretary when issuing or varying a Police and Crime Plan. The latest SPR issued in 2015 highlighted the following national areas of concern which must be addressed by each police force:

- terrorism
- serious and organised crime
- cyber-security incidents
- threats to public order and safety
- civil emergencies
- child sexual abuse and exploitation

At a local level, the police service are integral to minimising the risk of terrorism by preventing radicalisation, protecting public places, transport systems and critical infrastructure from attack.

Organised crime is serious crime which is coordinated and conducted by people working together on a continuing basis (Organised Crime Groups, or OCGs), often motivated by financial gain. OCGs are responsible for the trafficking of human beings, drugs, weapons, wildlife, historical and religious artefacts.

There are over 6,000 Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) active within the UK with a number operating in the Thames Valley. Therefore a combined national and local strategy is required.

In this section, I particularly want to highlight issues of local concern:

- Improving community resilience.
- Improving information sharing.

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Improving community resilience

The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and the Government's CONTEST strategy shape the national response to counter-terrorism. The aim is to reduce the risk to the UK and its interests overseas. The national response to domestic terrorism is coordinated between GCHQ, MI5 and the Police Counter Terrorism Command based in London, which coordinates the various Regional Counter Terrorism Units. The National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) are developing a common approach with regards to tackling national threats such as terrorism and organised crime aligning resources across England and Wales.

"I am aware of the massive effort required to manage the current terrorist threat and the resources demanded to address cybercrime, in addition to more traditional crime, domestic abuse etc…"

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I will monitor these developments and engage with my national counterparts regarding implementation strategies. I am particularly keen to see national approaches develop to support the police service investigate large scale financial fraud.

Locally, a strong response can be achieved by active partnerships sharing information to provide an enhanced understanding of potential threats and criminal activity. Thames Valley Police hosts the South East Regional Counter Terrorism and Organised Crime Units (SEROCU and SECTU, respectively). Through these units, the police can counter serious national threats and receive expert capability and resources to advise and address local threats.

An important government approach to preventing radicalisation, extremism and terrorism is the PREVENT strategy. This strategy is designed to safeguard individuals, and vulnerable people in particular from exploitation from extremists. PREVENT training has been a statutory obligation since 2015 for all front line professionals in contact with vulnerable people, such as education, health, social services and police. This strategy builds on work demonstrating that local communities can help to prevent and protect themselves from radicalisation. I have particular concerns in relation to exploitation of those with mental health issues, rough sleepers and those within the prison estate in relation to the risk of radicalisation. I will continue to engage with communities across Thames Valley to understand their specific concerns, reassure, and raise awareness of counter-terrorism measures.

I am keen to see a more coordinated approach across Thames Valley to raising public awareness about serious organised crime and terrorism, to increase the dialogue between the public, local police teams and partnerships on both issues, and improve safeguarding of vulnerable people.

Improving information sharing

According to the National Crime Agency (NCA) in 2013, organised crime cost the United Kingdom around £24 billion and the figure is likely to be much higher today. The NCA's 2016 National Strategic Assessment of serious and organised crime highlights the top 5 threats to the UK as:

- Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse,

- Organised Immigration Crime,

- Cyber-crime.

- Firearms

- High end money laundering

I would also include drug trafficking. Drug trafficking involving organised criminals from outside of Thames Valley expanding their drug supply lines is becoming more prominent and it almost always involves exploitation of vulnerable persons. As well as children enticed into carrying or selling drugs (as discussed earlier under Priority 3: Reducing Re-offending), adults such as rough sleepers, or vulnerable people whose houses are taken over for the purposes of drug dealing ('cuckooed'), are also frequent targets of organised drug gangs.

Too frequently, crimes that exploit vulnerable people succeed due to failure of organisations to share information. All organisations must be prepared to 'dare to share' information to protect the most vulnerable. In parallel with my ambition to improve the willingness of staff to highlight organisational failings with regards safeguarding (discussed under priority 1, Vulnerability). I am keen to see organisations challenged when failure to share information is observed. I would like to see an information sharing culture emerge across Thames Valley with the shared aim of safeguarding vulnerable people.

Due to political turmoil in countries around the world, immigration crime such as human trafficking and exploitation is increasing. As well as creating a significant new group of vulnerable people, immigration crime also has the potential to 'import' dangerous criminals from overseas into our communities. Illegal migrants are at high risk of exploitation by traffickers who may require debt payment through forced labour, slavery, or by requiring the commission of other crimes. With regards the importation of people with existing criminal records, I am keen to understand if a link exists between those who have entered the UK illegally, and an increased risk of terrorism or local violent crime.

There needs to be closer engagement with the community they work with …….. creating an ownership between the community and the police."

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Key aims:

- Coordinated public awareness messages, campaigns and approaches by police and local authorities tackling terrorism and serious organised crime at a local level.

- Greater oversight across Thames Valley of activities to prevent violent extremism, share lessons learned and promote good practice.

- A 'dare to share' culture across all agencies, public or private, voluntary or community, who deal with vulnerable young people and adults.

- Better engagement and information sharing between police and organisations supporting vulnerable migrants and rough sleepers, with the aim of preventing exploitation by organised criminals.