Minutes

Minutes of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel held on Friday, 7 September 2018, in Olympic Room Aylesbury Vale District Council Gatehouse Road Aylesbury Bucks HP19 8FF, commencing at 11.00 am and concluding at 1.30 pm.

Members Present
Councillor Trevor Egleton (Chairman - South Bucks District Council), Councillor Eric Batts (Vale of White Horse District Council), Councillor Bill Bendyshe-Brown (Buckinghamshire County Council), Councillor Robin Bradburn (Milton Keynes Council), Councillor David Carroll (Wycombe District Council), Councillor Emily Culverhouse (Chiltern District Council), Julia Girling (Independent Member), Councillor Tom Hayes (Oxford City Council), Councillor Sophia James (Reading Borough Council), Councillor Norman MacRae (West Oxfordshire District Council), Councillor Kieron Mallon (Oxfordshire County Council), Councillor Pavitar Mann (Slough Borough Council), Curtis-James Marshall (Independent Member), Councillor Andrew McHugh (Cherwell District Council), Councillor Barrie Patman (Wokingham Borough Council), Councillor Emma Webster (West Berkshire Council) and Councillor Mark Winn (Aylesbury Vale District Council).

Officers Present
Khalid Ahmed (Scrutiny Officer).

Others Present
Matthew Barber (Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner), Francis Habgood (Chief Constable, Thames Valley Police), Paul Hammond (Chief Executive, Office of PCC), Katy Harris (Lead Analyst – South East Regional Organised Crime Unit), Ian Thompson (Chief Finance Officer, Office of PCC), Anthony Stansfeld (Police and Crime Commissioner) and Detective Supt. Jess Wadsworth (Head of South East Regional Organised Crime Unit).

13   DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor David Carroll declared a Personal Interest as the ex Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley.

Councillor Tom Hayes declared a Personal Interest as a trustee of a charity that delivers independent trauma advice in Oxford.

14   MINUTES

The Minutes of the Police and Crime Panel meeting held on 22 June 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

[In relation to Minute No.10 – Topical Issues, that "Exploitation" be added as work programme theme in 2019 once the independent exploitation trauma advisory service in Buckinghamshire has bedded in.

In relation to Minute No.9 – Annual Review of the Panel's Rules of Procedure, Panel Membership and Budget – that Councillor Robin Bradburn be appointed as a Member to the Budget Task and Finish Group and Councillor David Carroll be appointed to the Complaints Sub-Committee.]

15   PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Scrutiny Officer for the Panel reported that as a result of increased publicity for this Panel meeting, several public questions had been submitted to the Panel for consideration. However, most of them did not meet the criteria for consideration by the Panel as they were operational policing questions and could only be answered by the Chief Constable. The Panel agreed that these questions would be submitted to the relevant Cabinet Member of the local authority and to the local area commander of the area concerned, for responses.

The following public question was submitted:

"I note that the Police budget has been cut by 20% since 2010 and there is more to come. There has been a recent upsurge in crime in our rural area and how is this further cut in the Police budget going to affect our local policing in the future. Also I understand the PCC was endeavouring to recover costs for extra security roles covered within the Thames Valley in order to mitigate the considerable impact on the budget."

In response, the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) reported that there had been very large cuts to police funding over the last few years, with in real terms Thames Valley making £100m worth of cuts. This has had an impact on police numbers on the ground and has had a bearing on the rising crime rates throughout the country, although the proportionate increase in crime in the Thames Valley region, was substantially less than the rest of the country. In comparison to similar sized forces, the crime rate increase in Thames Valley has been lower. With increased cuts in funding it was inevitable that this would impact on how well the police performed.

In relation to the extra security roles which were carried out by Thames Valley Police; the visit by the President of the United States of America, and the Royal Wedding, a large number of police officers were used on these operations which did take them away from their normal duties.

The PCC was assured that the costs incurred for the President's Visit would be reimbursed.

The rules on other big events was different, the costs incurred had to exceed over 1% of the annual Force budget before a claim could be submitted, and for Thames Valley, this equated to approximately £4m.

A Member asked if the PCC had made any representations to the Home Office regarding the scale of the cuts to police funding and the need to address this and improve the Criminal Justice System. The PCC replied that representation had been made by him, by the Chief Constable, and by other PCCs. There was a comprehensive spending review coming up and there had been a case put forward for increased funding. The formula on how funding was allocated was inequitable. Thames Valley Police received around £160 per head of population which was made up for Government Grant and Council Tax. The big northern Cities such as Manchester and Liverpool received substantially more funding than the Thames Valley. Merseyside Police received around £200 per head of population, with both Manchester and the West Midlands receiving around £180-190 per head of population. That difference of £30- £40 multiplied by the population of the Thames Valley of around 2.3m, would amount to around £70-90m, which would fund up to nearly 2,000 extra police officers.

The recent newspaper articles on police on the streets and the increase in crime, failed to take account

of this funding discrepancy. In addition last year's terrorist attacks have made it politically impossible to address this inequity at this stage.

A Member referred to the new Home Secretary who appeared to be advocating increased funding for the police and welcomed this. Thanks were passed onto the PCC and the Chief Constable regarding the excellent policing of the Anti-President Trump protests which took place in the Thames Valley and it was asked how many other Police Forces were involved in the policing of the visit. In addition reference was made to the representations which had been made against the visit, based on the actual cost which would be involved.

The PCC reported that Thames Valley Police had no say in the detail of where the President visited but carried out their policing responsibilities to the utmost of the capability of the Force. The Chief Constable reported that there were around 20 different Forces who were engaged in various parts of the President's visit.

The Chairman commented that the Panel would continue to urge the PCC to make representations to the Government for better funding as policing was now getting to a critical level in the Thames Valley and the PCC had the full support of the Panel in asking for a fairer funding solution.

16   THEMED ITEM - THE GOVERNANCE OF THE SOUTH EAST REGIONAL ORGANISED CRIME UNIT

The Panel was informed that the purpose of the themed item was to look at the governance of the South East Regional Crime Unit (SE ROCU) and how the Police and Crime Commissioner held the Chief Constable to account for the performance of SEROCU.

The first part of the item consisted of the PCC providing a presentation on the services SEROCU provided, how it was funded and the key issues which faced the Unit.

What is SEROCU?

Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCUs) formed a critical part of the national policing network and provided a range of specialist policing capabilities to forces which helped them to tackle serious and organised crime effectively.

•   Comprised of police officers & staff from forces of Thames Valley, Sussex, Surrey, Hampshire and (to a lesser extent) Kent. The PCC commented that it made sense for Kent to be part of the SE but a decision had been made for Kent to be part of the Eastern region collaboration. Geographically this did not make sense to him
•   Had responsibility for protecting communities in the South East from serious organised crime
•   Worked in conjunction with UK Border Agency, Her Majesty's Revenue & Custom and the National Crime Agency (NCA) to combat cross-border organised crime
•   Supported and provided resilience to SE forces (e.g. TVP Serious & Organised Crime Unit (SOCU) and Local Police Areas (LPAs) as well as national agencies and capabilities
•   SEROCU was aligned with the Counter Terrorism Policing South East unit (CTPSE - formerly SECTU)
•   Thames Valley Police acted as 'Host Force' for both services – one Regional Assistant Chief Constable leads the combined unit and reports to the Chief Constable of TVP.

SEROCU comprised of the following departments / functions: Investigations, Regional Fraud, Regional Asset Recovery, Regional Asset Confiscation, Prison Investigation, Prison Intelligence, Regional Intelligence Bureau, Govt. Agency Intelligence Network, Covert Operations, Under Cover On Line, Protected Persons, Operational Security, Cyber Crime, Digital & Technical Exploitation Capability, E-

Forensics and Technical Surveillance.

The PCC referred to the work Thames Valley Police had carried out in relation to the HBOS Bank fraud and he commented that nationally not enough was being done in relation to fraud. Reference was made to money laundering into this country from countries such as Russia.

SEROCU Governance Arrangements

The Panel was informed that SEROCU and CTPSE services were delivered under a Section 22 Collaboration Agreement, signed by the respective PCCs and Chief Constables of the five South East Force areas. Members could withdraw from the S22 Agreement by giving 12 months' notice.

The Regional Governance Board comprised the PCCs and Chief Constables of the five Force areas and it met quarterly. The Board enabled all PCCs to hold their respective Chief Constables to account for delivery of services provided on a regional basis

The SEROCU executive role was provided by the Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police and the Regional Assistant Chief Constable was from Thames Valley Police, with the Thames Valley PCC having the responsibility for holding the Thames Valley CC to account for services provided by SEROCU.

The leadership role which the Regional Governance Board had included carrying out the following:
• Ensuring appropriate and effective governance arrangements were in place
• Setting the strategic direction for regional working
• Ensuring compliance with Govt. & partner funding requirements
• Agreeing the relevant services to be provided by SEROCU in accordance with the terms of the S22 Agreement and the Annual Business Plan, Strategic Plan, the Annual Budget and the regional funding model ('Cost Apportionment Formula')
• Included in the annual business plan was approving Business objectives, Key priorities, Performance measures, Financial, personnel & other operational resource implications
• Considering proposals for future regional working & oversight
• Having regard to any recommended actions, guidance or regulations that may impact on collaborative working

The Oversight & Scrutiny role of the Board included:
• Monitoring the use of financial, personnel & other operational resources
• Monitoring SEROCU operational performance, outcomes and emerging issues such as disruptions of organised crime group (OCG) activities, Investigations of OCGs and updates of strategic threats by crime type (e.g. County Lines/Drugs, Child Sexual Exploitation, Modern slavery & human trafficking, etc) and significant OCGs
• Receiving and approving an Annual Report
• Ensuring oversight & mitigation of strategic risks and provision of adequate & effective internal audit arrangements.

The Board met quarterly and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services has a standing invitation to attend. Minutes were usually classified, but non-confidential minutes were published on the respective PCCs' websites.

What worked well and what could be improved?

The PCC reported that what worked well was that there were regular and auditable reporting and decision making, the right people attended the meetings and there was constructive challenge from

Chief Constables and PCCs.

Improvements could be made in terms of effective scrutiny of specialist operational functions as knowledge of specialist subject matter was required.

There was no national comparison of regional ROCU performance, because the organisational arrangements and functions undertaken were all so different, reflecting regional priorities and requirements, so it was difficult to judge whether SEROCU was providing value for money. Board meetings covered a wide ranging agenda.

The PCC reported that there needed to be a re-organisation of how functions could be de-centralised. The Specialist Capability Board was a national forum which looked at all specialists policing but with small police forces, there needed to more centralisation of some of these specialist functions such as counter terrorism and serious organised crime.

Detective Supt. Jess Wadsworth (Head of SEROCU) and Katy Harris (Lead Analyst, SEROCU)

SEROCU operated in a complex set up, but acted as an important point of connection between police forces and the National Crime Agency (NCA). The Unit worked closely with the National Police Chiefs Council, and the Chief Constables who had lead roles in serious organised crime. The Forces within the south east were supported and in Kent's case, the Prison establishment was also supported.

The Home Office had recently relaunched a Serious Organised Crime Strategy, which had bedded SEROCU into that and clarified where the Unit sat in the landscape. Capability reviews were being looked at, as well as what the NCA brought to the table. There was a look at reducing duplication and improving efficiency.

SEROCU capabilities fell largely into five main categories. Intelligence, Under Cover Policing, Technical, Cyber and Financial.

On an annual basis, SEROCU looked at what the intelligence looked like and made decisions on priorities around this. Child Sexual Exploitation, particularly on-line, Immigration crime, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking, drugs and "County Lines" and firearm's crimes were main priorities.

Work took place on prison investigations in relation to exchange of information around managing the risks posed by organised crime group members who were in prison. In addition, foreign national offenders, disruption of these took place to get rid of the problem.

Measuring success was carried out around Organised Crime grouping, whereby the Forces, the regions, the partner agencies, mapped their data. Details of the numbers of the Organised Crime groups were reported. Reference was made to poly criminality, whereby criminals dealt in multiple crime types i.e. drugs, cigarettes or human beings.

The Panel was provided with information on disruptions made to Serious Crime Groups, and this formed part of the Unit's performance reporting. SEROCU was capable of offering support around most threats, including offering support to crimes which occurred across Police Force borders.

Reference was made to recent successes which included major fraud from traveller families dating back to 2016. There were over 100 victims of this fraud, it involved 13 Police Forces, 39 people were charged with money laundering offences and almost £3m was confiscated back and given back to the identified victims.

Examples of ongoing cybercrime investigations were reported which SEROCU assisted Police Forces with. The "Dark Net" - Thames Valley Police had carried out operations to stop individuals conducting criminal activity through this forum.

Investigations took place around cybercrimes against big organisations which were sometimes carried out by vulnerable individuals with mental health problems. Police worked with partner agencies to offer support to these people.

Reference was made to the work which the unit did in support of Forces, to support ongoing operations. There had been uplifts in staffing around certain capabilities such as On-Line capabilities. There was now better recording of these crimes. Thames Valley accessed SEROCU capabilities.

Undercover officers worked on "County-Lines" drugs cases, to infiltrate criminal gangs and to help Thames Valley Police get that evidence to take criminal proceedings forward. In a recent murder case in Oxford, SEROCU assisted TVP in the investigation.

SEROCU's relationship with the Government Intelligence Agency Network was useful to help Forces in investigations. Examples were given of the work of the Disruption Teams working with partner agencies, to bring criminals to task.

Reference was also made to some of the national work which the SEROCU carried out due to innovatory work of the Unit which was recognised nationally.

Challenges were around funding some of the operations, which presented instability as funding could be short term which created uncertainty. Short term contracts created instability for staff. Another challenge related to Estates. Of the 9 ROCUs, SEROCU was the only one that did not own their own estates, which meant that the service was located around many sites, sharing facilities with partner agencies. Co-location was a positive, but SEROCU were tenants which gave an element of vulnerability. Temporary accommodation was within Police owned buildings; Hampshire and Thames Valley, which was not sustainable in the long term.

Overall, SEROCU did not have a good enough footprint within the Thames Valley which placed limitations on the operational coverage and people on the ground. Working closely with SOP ensured things were covered.

"County-Lines "

The Home Office definition was that "County Lines" was a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas (within the UK), using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of "deal line". They were likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money and they would often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.

The three elements involved in "County Lines" were:- It must have a Branded name, or be a single identified phone number. It had to involve movement and export of drugs, money and people from one area to another. Historically it was always thought that this movement was from a large metropolitan area to somewhere more rural. The new definition now allowed for movement within one Force area, for example from Reading to Slough or Oxford to Wantage. The third element of the definition had to involve a gang, a criminal network or even an organised crime group.

"County Lines" could also involve exploitation and coercion of individuals and/or a workforce. The relatively new phenomena of "County Lines" was a nationally challenging area at ROCU and NCA level, and at Force level, and it was difficult to determine the exact data and numbers of people involved in "County Lines" and its businesses.

Visual examples were given of mapped "County Lines" operations which highlighted the complexities of the problems which crime agencies had. There were multiple different cells operating across the country, across different Force areas, people having specialist roles. Some of the criminal businesses who were involved in "County Lines" could be in competition with each other or they could even be working together. The management of the criminal business were also often hostile to the workers in the business.

"Taxing" was a term used for the intimidation and violence used against workers in these criminal businesses. Robberies were staged against people to steal products and management would hold workers to account for this and they would be indebted to management for the cost of the losses and would have to work for free to pay off this debt.

It was a complex issue, working out who was working with whom, and who people were working for. The networks were constantly shifting with the biggest network previously being in Hampshire but now having shifted to the Thames Valley area which was an intelligence challenge.

The threat of the "County Lines" danger was widespread, emanating from the Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool and London areas. Trafficking of people from one area to another took place and both adults and children within the Thames Valley area had been identified.

Most of the information which was held related to local drug dealers and vulnerable people but it was not these individuals who were driving this threat. This threat was driven by the management of these criminal businesses and specific enablers who were often criminally exploiting people at grass roots level. Information on the management of these criminal businesses was most difficult to obtain and to work out who was linked to whom.

SEROCU was the lead ROCU for "County Lines", influencing national working groups, and working directly on the national response to this issue. This benefitted the South East as pilot schemes were used in the region. The South East had the greatest level of "County Lines" activity, mainly because of the proactive identification of the problem which had been carried out by SEROCU.

It was recognised that "County Lines" crossed Force and ROCU boundaries and co-ordination was required nationally to tackle the problem. Reference was made to the Regional Prisons Intelligence Unit and it was important that intelligence was gathered from criminals inside prisons, who continued to operate their criminal businesses from prisons.

"County Lines" required a whole Government approach to combat the problem.

Reference was made to the use of vulnerable people in "County Lines" crimes, in terms of criminal gangs taking over individual's homes and cars to conduct their business. Local Authority Housing Services had a role to play in this in terms of monitoring the number of complaints received against addresses relating to noise, unusual activity and anti-social behaviour. The Education Service also had a role to play in terms of identifying those young people who were groomed for "County Lines" criminal activity. These were being groomed "face to face", on social media etc. There was a clear preventative responsibility to teach children about health relationships, and to understand other choices which may be available to them. Many young people did not have many choices around employment, training and

education so it was up to the authorities to put in place resources and strategies to provide alternative pathways for these young people.

Questions

1.   With the lack of benchmarking information on the performance of SEROCU, how does the PCC ensure that SEROCU was getting results and providing value for money?

The PCC reported that it was very difficult to benchmark because you were not comparing like with like. In the South West for example, there was limited ability to deal with this problem as SEROCU did a lot of work for them. But from looking at the figures, SEROCU was performing well if you compared figures.

2.   In relationship to partnerships and the other agencies which the Police had to work with, what impact has budgetary pressures on local authorities and charities had on tackling this type of crime? This is particularly in relation to social services and education, areas that the Police work with in terms of tackling these crimes.

The PCC reported that partners which worked with the PCC were part funded from PCC funds; through the Community Safety Fund. Individual charities were also supported through part funding, some of which is provided from the Police Property Act Fund. The PCC in consultation with the Chief Constable awarded funding to charities through this, although this was a difficult process as this was oversubscribed. All public authorities were facing budgetary constraints.

3.   At the last meeting, the PCC was asked about what communication he had with PCC colleagues in West Midlands regarding the trafficking of young people and drugs from Birmingham to Oxford. An update was requested on this.

The Panel was informed this had not yet taken place but the issues would be raised with West Midlands PCC shortly.

4.   The data which was shown during the presentation broke down instances of types of organised crime in the Thames Valley; CSE with 14 organised crime groups, drugs at 472, "County Lines" at 21. How many poly criminality groups were there? Also in relation to the targeting of vulnerable young people by these criminals for sexual exploitation and drugs, what characteristics were criminals looking for in terms of vulnerability?

On the data provided and on poly criminality; this was cross cutting. This was a complex area, as these gangs had elements of many crimes, but for the purpose of categorising these crimes, a judgment call had to be made. The poly criminality usually operated at management level of the gang.

In terms of characteristics of vulnerability, absolutely anybody can be a victim. There are of course readily identifiable characteristics, but SEROCU did not just concentrate on these. Of course, young people who had come into contact with social services, mental health service and education could be perceived as being vulnerable, but criminals also targeted young people who would not be perceived as ordinarily being vulnerable.

5.   This was a complex structure which required a great deal of communication and an exchange of information. When frontline policing identified individuals and it gets fed into the system, what are the timescales to when this is identified as an organised crime and not just a general crime?

SEROCU reported that it was the visible aspects of serious and organised crime and that is why the Unit tries to understand what Forces are dealing with day to day. Whether they are being called to addresses where individuals are being exploited. There are operations currently taking place where officers are not dealing with the crime in front of them, but will attack their business model and take their money, which hurts these gangs more. The constant disruption by forces has to go on and to cut off at the higher level, but this cannot be done without gaining intelligence at grass roots. Timescales varied and depended on the individual case.

The Deputy PCC reported that Police Officers were now more aware of what to look for when out on the streets and can identify victims of exploitation and know what the risks and threats are.

6.   The technology to jam mobile phone signals exists and has done so for a long time, so why is this not done, particularly for those in prison running "County Lines" businesses. Reference was made to "indebting", whereby drug's runners are convicted and then let out, back onto the streets, being in debt to the organised crime gangs. Should these young people be treated as juvenile offenders or victims?

The Police can go to the Courts for a restriction order to switch telephone lines off and jam a "county line". However, this may not solve the problem as the void would be filled quite quickly. On indebting, in the policing world the culture has shifted dramatically and the Police recognise that some of the people encountered are not all perpetrators and criminals, but are victims and require support and need to be sign posted to relevant support agencies. The Police recognise that these people are vulnerable and a balanced decision is made whether to put them out on the street to help with intelligence gathering or to protect them because they are vulnerable.

The PCC referred to a meeting he had with the Lord Chancellor, who was in charge of Prisons, where he commented about blocking mobile phone coverage in Prisons and about the possible tagging of released serious criminals.

7.   What percentage of "County Lines" crime is in the boundaries of Thames Valley and how do we make sure we are co-operating with other ROCUs?

It is difficult to give a percentage because the picture is ever changing. The ROCU network is a strong network, with lots of joint working, exchanging of information and conference calls. Although ROCUs were maybe a little inconsistent, they do work together, with dedicated officers who liaise with other ROCUs. The mapping system is used by all ROCUs to ensure consistency and a joint approach to the problem.

8.   Do you have a problem with IT in terms of talking to Police Forces, and are the Police IT experts able to deal with some of the more sophisticated IT criminals out there?

The Panel was informed that the National County Lines Coordination Centre was to be set up, with each ROCU appointing a designated analyst to help with the intelligence and information sharing with other ROCUs. There were challenges with IT, with various different systems used by the 43 Forces. In the South East Area, all Forces used the same business provider which meant Forces could talk to each other.

In the South East region, there is an outstanding Cyber Team who are digitally and technically skilled and who have an understanding of the criminal mind set in this field. Team Cyber South East, comprises of all the Forces that sit in the South East, who share information and have a joined up approach to the threats posed by cybercrime. Reference was made to civilian cyber volunteers who were skilled in IT,

who worked for the major world IT businesses, who voluntarily worked with the police in this area.

9.   Details were requested on the process for bidding for funding from the Early Intervention Youth Fund.

The Chief Executive of the OPCC reported that PCCs had to act as the 'lead bidders', and work with CSPs and other partners in order to submit a partnership bid for funding. One of the OPCC members of staff had been working with, Community Safety Managers across the Thames Valley to develop an appropriate single collective bid, rather than a number of discrete bids per each CSP. The Government had extended the deadline for PCCs to submit a bid to 28 September 2018.

10.   Whilst it was understood that benchmarking was difficult in this field, however, is there any information available on the level of undercover work which is carried out and an assessment of its success?

There had been some work done in the South Eastern region to see how much disruptive work had been carried out, but it is too difficult to assess the impact of the work carried out in relation to reduction of criminality. Undercover work could be one aspect of an operation so it is difficult to assess its impact on its own.

11.   In relation to victims of "County Lines" crimes, is there anything which could be done to raise the awareness to those vulnerable people who are exploited by this crime, as often they are unaware that they are victims of this crime?

Counter Terrorism leads on this in terms of how you recognise victims. In relation to what do others see or recognise, Prevent, Protect and Prepare are all locked into the approach to "County Lines". The Chief Constable referred to information which had been shared with local authorities, particularly in the Social Services and Education sector, so that potential victims can be recognised. The use of Closure Orders has been used to restrict access to particular premises and to cut down on anti-social behaviour and this reduced the power of those criminals "cuckooing" people's properties. Reference was made to Operation Stronghold where work has been done to coach and mentor victims to help them understand the damage which is being done to them in terms of exploitation whilst being involved in this criminal activity.

12.   How important is the flow of intelligence and information sharing on criminal gangs with Police Forces in the European Union?

The Chief Constable reported that it was critical that there was joint working with European Union Police Forces. Work was taking place to see what the gaps may be, post Brexit with all the scenarios. European Police Forces wished to remain engaged with UK Forces, as this country was a key player in Europe on police-wide initiatives. The PCC commented that the loss to the rest of Europe of the UK as the lead nation in terms of overall policing intelligence would be huge and the European Union would not want this to happen. There were strong intelligence links with Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United States and that accumulative intelligence was in a different league to anything which Europe had.

RESOLVED

That the presenters be thanked for the excellent information provided and the Panel noted the work carried out by SEROCU and commended both the PCC and the Chief Constable on the unit's performance.

17   PERFORMANCE REPORT - POLICE ETHICS AND REFORM

This item was withdrawn and would be considered at the next meeting of the Panel.

18   CHAIRMAN AND PCC UPDATE

The Panel was provided with a report prepared by the Scrutiny Officer which presented details of topical policing issues since the last meeting of the Panel.

The PCC reported that although funding for Thames Valley Police was inadequate, for the past 12 months finance had stabilised. A major issue for Thames Valley Police was retention of staff, rather than recruitment of staff. Courses were running at a maximum in terms of numbers, but retention was the real problem, partially due to the cost of living and house prices in the Thames Valley.

The PCC reported on the success of the increase in "stop and search". When it was applied fairly and properly, this was an effective weapon in the fight against crime.

Reference was made to the recent cut-backs in Magistrates Courts which had an impact on the judicial system in terms of cases collapsing due to distances witnesses had to travel and also to magistrates themselves. There could be other alternative venues used such as the local Council Chamber of a local authority. In relation to the judicial system, a Member raised the problem of the lack of pre-trial preparation for witnesses which meant that witnesses were ill prepared, that the Courts were not made aware of any adjustments which were required. An example was given of a wheelchair bound witness not able to access the Court room for a trial. The PCC said he would investigate this and update the Panel.

The PCC updated the Panel on progress made in terms of illegal encampments. Throughout the summer, there had been a number of illegal encampments within the Thames Valley. What was required was central legislation to provide a uniform approach to this to stop the travellers just moving on elsewhere. Many of the travellers originated from Southern Ireland, where illegal encampments were treated differently, whereby those travellers who trespassed on other peoples' land, had their vehicles confiscated. Reference was made to the protocol which the Panel had agreed which provided a consistent approach to illegal encampments throughout the Thames Valley.

A discussion took place on the problems with non-emergency 101 calls, and that some residents had to wait an inordinate length of time for their calls to be taken. The Chief Constable commented that the Police Force's Call Centre had had a challenging last couple of months, with an increase in the number of calls which had an impact on the service. This would improve and although there were examples of residents having to wait an unacceptable amount of time for their 101 calls to be answered, the vast majority of calls were dealt with efficiently within two minutes. The Panel was asked to note that calls to the 999 service were the priority and these were dealt at an average within 10 seconds. Reference was made to the online services which residents could use for non-emergency contact which would improve interaction between the Police and the public.

A Member raised a question regarding knife crime, and whether there was the need for a Knife Crime Policy. The Chief Constable commented that there was lots of working taking place around knife crime; in schools there was education and preventative work taking place around knife crimes. Thames Valley did not have the same level of problem as London. In response to a request for a breakdown of by local authority of the data for the number of people arrested for knife crime, Members were informed that this data would be held by the relevant Community Safety Partnership.

A question was asked about the number of assaults against police officers in the Thames Valley and

why this was on the increase. The Chief Constable reported that the assaults data was possibly down to better reporting and recording and encouraging officers to report these assaults.

An update was provided on implementation of the apprenticeship scheme. The Panel was informed this was still in the procurement stage.

Reference was made to the "track my crime" initiative and an update was requested on this. The Chief Constable reported this would be operational in 2019.

19   WORK PROGRAMME

The report was noted.

20   DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was on 16 November 2018 at 11.00am at Aylesbury Vale District Council Offices.

CHAIRMAN