

## Report to the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel

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**Title:** Update on Local Policing Model

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Panel



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### Reasons for the Report

At a meeting of the Panel held on 17 November 2017, consideration was given to an item which looked at how the new Local Policing Model was being implemented in the Wycombe Local Policing Area and the positive impact this new model was having on the reduction in crime. In addition the Panel looked at the impact of partnership working with other organisations to address demand and to deal with local policing issues.

The Panel asked that the Police and Crime Commissioner continue to keep the new operating model under review with the Chief Constable and that a report back be given at the end of the first year of operation.

For this meeting, the newly appointed Chief Constable will provide an update on the new operating model's first year of operation.

In addition the Panel is provided with details of how South Yorkshire Police are successfully putting in to practice modern neighbourhood policing.

### Background

In June 2016, the Panel received a report which informed Members that Thames Valley Police (TVP) 2014-15 Delivery Plan had included an action to review the approach to Neighbourhood Policing in light of best practice nationally and emerging College of Policing evidence. This was also aligned with commitments under the Strategic Objectives in the Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) Police and Crime Plan.

The strategy for the delivery of neighbourhood policing for Thames Valley Police was intended to complement the commitment of working together to make communities safer, and comprised the following four elements: Visibility - to increase public confidence and reduce crime; Engagement - to enable the participation of communities in policing at their chosen level; Problem solving - to

identify, establish causation, respond and address local problems and Community Resilience - to increase public involvement in policing.

Previously at a Panel Meeting a video was shown on local policing, <https://youtu.be/Ek9Mt-pliwA> where it was said that “The concept behind the new operating model is to deliver more efficient and smarter ways of working whilst ensuring that resourcing matches demand and that the right person is deployed to the right job at the right time. Pilot schemes were launched on three of the Force’s Local Policing Areas – Reading, West Berkshire and Milton Keynes, focusing upon different aspects of the proposed operating model and the results have been very encouraging. Through smarter and more consistent processes, which we are calling ‘Smarter Resolution’ time spent investigating specific crime types through to resolution has reduced significantly by around 30%. This in turn has enabled faster response times in relation to Immediate and Urgent Graded Incidents. “

### **Information presented at 17 November 2017 Police and Crime Panel meeting**

The Chief Constable reported that the new model had gone live in June 2017, during a time when Thames Valley Police had lost a number of police officers (about 100). Also there had been four murders in the first few weeks, terrorist incidents in June of that year, which increased demand during implementation of the model. The point was made that even the old policing model would not have worked well during this high demand period.

Reference was made to the loss of police officers to other Police Forces due to the cost of living in the Thames Valley region. They were looking at alternative ways to boost numbers such as encouraging retired officers to undertake case investigations which helped the resilience of the Force.

Thames Valley Police had received an ‘Outstanding’ HMIC inspection grade with regard to efficiency in the Force but there had been problems initially with regard to new shift patterns under the new operating model. Some police officers had been finding the new patterns tiring as they were being asked to work less each day but as a consequence they had fewer days off. There had been wide ranging consultation with officers and continuing debate over improvements to the model.

The high demand over the summer of 2017 had impacted on 999/101 calls but the number of calls had slightly dropped. Response times had been monitored under immediate/non immediate responses but the majority of calls were being dealt with in a timely way. In terms of teams responding to calls the roll out of laptops had helped the Force. There was a dashboard of performance measures. Caseloads per officer had increased because of sickness issues. The HMIC report on efficiency had complimented the new operating model and the Chief Constable reported that whilst it had been a difficult change process and they were now six months into implementation, he felt that the model was an improvement and a better way of working.

The Local Area Commander for Wycombe Superintendent Kevin Brown gave an update on how the model was operating in his area. He informed the Panel that he had only been in post at the end of June so had no preconceived ideas of how it would operate and had not been involved in any of the planning processes.

He reported that the model was not quite fit for purpose at the start of the process and in the last 3-4 months he had been looking at ways to optimise resources to meet the outcomes of the model. There had been a big change management programme which had included a change of culture, mindset and working patterns and there had been scepticism from officers. As the resourcing had not been ideal at the start this had an impact on investigations and the Force had become reactive rather than proactive. Police officers had been concerned about their roles and responsibilities and struggled to manage their daily workloads.

However, a 'one team' ethos had been encouraged in the new model where individual officers each had a role to play and by working together this had improved control and ownership. They had developed a smarter resolution function to deal with lower level crime by telephone and High Wycombe area was one of the best in the Force. Expectations of the public had been managed where there was unlikely to be progress. Initially there had been a time lag of 2-4 weeks in dealing with inquiries and this was now 1-4 days so services had improved.

With the smarter resolution function they had decreased demand by 40% in High Wycombe and officers were now more positive about the new operating model and the benefit to neighbourhood policing. The problem solving teams were working well and they were employing graduates to work on community projects as a dedicated resource. They were building community resilience to deal with issues such as homelessness and anti-social behaviour to create space for investigations to be undertaken.

### **During discussion the following comments/ questions were made by the Panel-**

- The Chief Constable reported that the response times for immediate was just below 80% at 20mins and less urgent was below 60%.
- Concern was expressed about visible neighbourhood policing and the use of the 101 service to provide information. Reference was made to the HMIC report where the Force figures for the abandonment rate for 101 calls had averaged 6.1% for the 3 months December 2016 to February 2017. This was not encouraging figure when the public were being encouraged to use 101. The Chief Constable reported that Reading in particular had been impacted by Force vacancies including Police Community Support Officer and there had been no back up available. The Force did have a commitment to having a geographical and visible presence and they were working with partners to address this.

The Chief Constable reported that he was totally committed to neighbourhood policing and that they were not where they should be with police officer numbers currently. In terms of 101 this had significantly improved but call centres still had to prioritise 999 calls and when there was a high demand this did impact on 101. There were finite resources. The more complex calls where a vulnerable person was involved would be assessed fully using the THOR model and these calls obviously took longer. They had a high benchmark of 40 seconds, which was higher than other Forces but the vast majority are within 2 minutes. There would always be anecdotal evidence that callers had to wait a long period of time. At the start of the call if they were experiencing high demand the caller was asked to call back at another time. There was a big change in technology which would be implemented next year (Contact Management Programme) which would allow more call handling to be undertaken over the internet which would allow telephone resources to be used for the most vulnerable. The Chief Constable encouraged all residents to persevere with 101 calls

The PCC did comment that when other Forces also had a high demand for 999 calls these were referred to other Forces and this had happened with the Metropolitan Police. The Chief Constable reported that the new contact management system was being used by Hampshire and the Thames Valley and 101 calls would be shared when there were peaks and troughs in demand.

- In response to a question regarding gaps in resourcing, the PCC reported that £100 million had been taken out of his budget and yet the Force was assessed as being 'outstanding' from HMIC in terms of efficiency. They would be down about 400 police officers and 100 PCSO's at the end of the year. There were concerns about the distribution of funding for Police Forces across the Country and Thames Valley received £160 Government grant per head of population whereas northern metropolitan forces received approx. £190 per head. That difference in Government funding of £30, times the population of Thames Valley (2million), would pay for a large number of police officers. Resources had also been taken away to deal with the terrorist threat. The PCC had raised the precept at just below 2% each year but to make a real difference he would have to raise it by 10%. Some PCCs had been discussing the possibility of the Government removing the cap on the increase of the police precept and he would be interested to know residents views on this. If the cap was removed the PCC would go out to consultation to look at what level the precept should be raised to. The PCC commented that neighbourhood policing was a priority but that they still had to deal with threats such as counter terrorism which limited their ability to deal with street crime. There was also imported serious organised crime which needed to be addressed together with violence and 'county lines' and it was difficult to know where to prioritise. He would see what could be done about addressing drug dealing but unfortunately once a gang had been caught and prosecuted this would be soon be replaced by another gang.

- The Chief Constable reported that local police areas have the proactive capability to deal with issues such as targeting crimes such as drugs activity and protecting the vulnerable from cuckooing. They have had a number of successful operations relating to Serious Organised Crime. A number of posts were going to be released in January 2018 through the new operating model but this was before the Force experienced the significant rise in demand. Therefore the MTFP for next year does not now include the removal of these 50 posts. Thames Valley is currently undertaking a proactive recruitment campaign to mitigate the shortage of police officers which includes using staff case investigators. There were also budgetary pressures and in 2018/19 there was currently a shortfall of £3.17m which the Force will need to balance before the final proposed budget is presented to the PCC in January 2018. There was also a growth area in terms of vulnerability which was high risk and high harm such as modern slavery and county lines.

**From the Police Foundation, "The Future of Neighbourhood Policing"**

[police-foundation.org.uk-Neighbourhood-Policing-Report](https://www.police-foundation.org.uk/Neighbourhood-Policing-Report)

The Police Foundation is an independent think tank focused exclusively on improving policing and developing knowledge and understanding of policing and crime reduction. In May 2018 the Police Foundation published a report entitled "The Future of Neighbourhood Policing", which came about as a result of investigating how and why neighbourhood policing had changed in England and Wales since 2008, and what it looked like in 2017/18. This new knowledge was then used as a platform to establish sound principles for delivering sustainable, preventative, integrated and publicly connected local policing services for the future.

The many principles argued in the report which underpin the future of neighbourhood policing are being put into practice in South Yorkshire which could be used as a benchmark for more effective local “on the ground” policing. In 2014, faced with the need to make massive savings and with a growing public protection demand, neighbourhood and response functions were rolled together into thinned-out Local Policing Teams.

The theory was that these multi-talented local officers could be deployed more efficiently and flexibly; responding to emergency calls when needed, but engaging with the public and working on local problems, in support of neighbourhood PCSOs and named local inspectors, when things were quieter. In reality it led to a withdrawal from communities. Reactive demand continued to intensify while local knowledge, relationships and preventative problem-solving work ebbed away.

However, there is now a new leadership with a new vision and a new model. The first step was defining what neighbourhood policing actually meant for the force. Crucially, this included a commitment to having police teams dedicated to places, a clear statement of purpose, “to reduce crime, protect the vulnerable and enhance community safety” and a strong steer on how this should be done – by listening to the community and ‘problem-solving’.

The next question was how to deliver this with a depleted workforce with many pulls on resource. Part of the answer was to separate out the element of neighbourhood policing that provided universal coverage from the bit that did crime and harm reduction. With a patchwork of PCSOs providing the former across the whole force area, and with response shift patterns rebalanced to better fit the demand profile, a limited, but dedicated contingent of police officers could be carved out, to put back into the communities where they are most needed.

This involved producing a detailed mapping analysis, combining data on the distribution of harm-weighted crime, anti-social behaviour, police incidents and deprivation, to provide the evidence-base for a differentiated approach. In ‘complex’ areas like central Rotherham, (largely) ring-fenced police teams have been put in place, with individual officers taking responsibility for the smaller neighbourhoods within it. Their job is to re-engage with the community, build local insight and instigate action against the problems and issues that generated local crime, harm and demand.

With regard to urban areas like Sheffield city centre different challenges were presented. With the shifting footfall of commuters, businesses, students and shoppers requiring a different take on ‘neighbourhood’ and a more plural approach to community engagement – but with the same focus on understanding, unpicking and interrupting the structure of problems – like the use of Spice in public spaces – that corrode the health of the city.

Complex social problems like these need multi-dimensional responses that go beyond the policing. Therefore, to be effective, neighbourhood policing needs to integrate and interface with the other agencies that play a vital role. At the heart of the South Yorkshire model, is the creation of four new Community Safety Hubs, within which – in Rotherham, for example – the local neighbourhood team share desk space, information and ownership with colleagues from the Local Authority, mental health services, drug and alcohol treatment services and probation.

Neighbourhood policing has been brought back to the parts of South Yorkshire that need it most – places like Rotherham town centre, and nearby Masborough and Eastwood. There are not enough police officers to go back to the universal patchwork of local teams rolled out nationwide in the early 2000s – and policing has moved on – but each of these small places now has one or two

dedicated neighbourhood officers, working with colleagues nearby and with clear routes into other agencies. They are not there to respond to 999 calls or to investigate crimes, but simply to know and be known, to figure out what needs doing and how to get it done.

As in many places, the poorly-attended public meetings, where each neighbourhood's policing 'priorities' were once set, have been abandoned as it is now for local officers, and in particular the sergeants and inspectors who supervise them, to understand the public ask and interest, weigh this in the balance against the harms and risks the public cannot see and decide what needs doing most.