

Agenda

Date: Friday 3 November 2023

Time: 11.00 am

Venue: The Paralympic Room,
Buckinghamshire Council,
Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury
HP19 8FF



The Briefing Meeting for Members will be held at 10.30am. There should be sufficient space in the car park at the Council Offices.

Agenda Item	Time	Page No
1	Apologies for Absence	
2	Declarations of Interest	
3	Minutes 11.00am To agree the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2023.	5 - 18
4	Public Question Time Anyone who works or lives in the Thames Valley can ask a question at meetings of the Police and Crime Panel, at which a 20 minute session will be designated for hearing from the public. If you'd like to participate, please read the Public Question Time Scheme and submit your questions by email to tvpcp@buckinghamshire.gov.uk at least three working days in advance of the meeting.	
5	Fighting serious organised crime - County Lines and the protection of the vulnerable 11.05pm The report of the PCC sets out activity by the OPCC and Thames Valley Police in delivering the strategic priority of	19 - 34

fighting serious organised crime, as set out in the Police & Criminal Justice Plan 2021-2025.

A report of the Scrutiny Officer is attached which provides a summary of a Home Office publication on the criminal exploitation of children, young people and vulnerable adults for the supply of drugs, and transportation of the associated money and weapons (County Lines).

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| 6 | Thames Valley Police Violence Against Women and Girls Education Campaign
11.35am | 35 - 38 |
| | <p>The PCC will present a report providing details on a TVP Education campaign for Violence against Women and Girls.</p> | |
| 7 | Update on Thames Valley CCTV Partnership
12.00pm | 39 - 44 |
| | <p>To receive an update from the PCC on the progress made on the proposed CCTV partnership across the Thames Valley.</p> | |
| 8 | Annual Assurance Report 2022 from the Joint Independent Audit Committee to the PCC for Thames Valley and the Chief Constable of Thames Valley
12.20pm | 45 - 64 |
| | <p>This Annual Assurance Report 2022 explains how the Independent Audit Committee has complied with each of its specific responsibilities, during the last twelve months covering the period December 2021 to December 2022.</p> | |
| 9 | Update on the Panel's Task and Finish Groups
12.25pm | |
| | <p>To receive an update on the membership of the Panel's Task and Finish Groups.</p> | |
| 10 | Updates from the Chair of the Panel, the PCC and the Topical Issues Report
12.30pm | 65 - 74 |
| | <p>To receive updates from the Chair of the Panel and the PCC, if required. Also, to note and ask questions on the attached topical issues report.</p> | |

11 Work Programme

75 - 78

12.45pm

For Panel Members to put forward items for the Work Programme including ideas for themed meetings.

Date of next meeting: Friday 26 January 2024 – To take place at Thames Valley Police Sulhamstead training centre.

Membership

Councillor Robin Bradburn (Milton Keynes City Council) (Chairman), Councillor Karen Rowland (Reading Borough Council) (Vice-Chairman), Councillor Shaista Aziz (Oxford City Council), Councillor Peter Brazier (Buckinghamshire Council - co-optee), Councillor Phil Chapman (Cherwell District Council), Councillor David Carroll (Buckinghamshire Council), Councillor Sam Casey-Rerhaye (South Oxfordshire District Council), Councillor Emily Culverhouse (Buckinghamshire Council - co-optee), Councillor Neil Fawcett (Vale of White Horse District Council), Peter Gammond (Co-Opted Independent Member), Councillor Kandy Jefferies (Bracknell Forest Council), Pamela Mackenzie-Reilly (Co-opted Independent Member), Councillor Keith McLean (Milton Keynes City Council - co-optee), Councillor Stephen Newton (Wokingham Borough Council), Councillor Vicky Poole (West Berkshire Council), Councillor Simon Rouse (Buckinghamshire Council - co-optee), Councillor Geoff Saul (West Oxfordshire District Council), Councillor Mabu Shaik (Slough Borough Council), Councillor Richard Webber (Oxfordshire County Council) and Councillor Simon Werner (Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead)

For further information please contact: Khalid Ahmed on , email tvpcp@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

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Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel held on Friday 15 September 2023 in The Paralympic Room, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury HP19 8FF, commencing at 11.00 am and concluding at 1.30 pm.

Members present

Councillor Robin Bradburn (Milton Keynes City Council) (Chairman), Councillor Karen Rowland (Reading Borough Council) (Vice-Chairman), Councillor Shaista Aziz (Oxford City Council), Councillor Peter Brazier (Buckinghamshire Council - co-optee), Councillor Sam Casey-Rerhaye (South Oxfordshire District Council), Peter Gammond (Co-Opted Independent Member), Councillor Kandy Jefferies (Bracknell Forest Council), Pamela Mackenzie-Reilly (Co-opted Independent Member), Councillor Keith McLean (Milton Keynes City Council - co-optee), Councillor Stephen Newton (Wokingham Borough Council), Councillor Vicky Poole (West Berkshire Council), Councillor Simon Rouse (Buckinghamshire Council - co-optee), Councillor Geoff Saul (West Oxfordshire District Council), Councillor Mabu Shaik (Slough Borough Council), Councillor Richard Webber (Oxfordshire County Council) and Councillor Simon Werner (Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead)

Substitute Members in attendance

Councillor Andrew McHugh (Cherwell District Council) (for Cllr Chapman) and Councillor Richard Newcombe (Buckinghamshire Council) (for Cllr Carroll)

Officers Present

Khalid Ahmed (Scrutiny Officer).

Others Present

Matthew Barber (Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner) and Jason Hogg (Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police) (Remotely attended).

Agenda Item

13 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted by Cllr Carroll (Buckinghamshire Council) (Cllr Newcombe Substituting), Cllr Chapman (Cherwell District Council) (Cllr McHugh substituting) and Cllr Culverhouse (Buckinghamshire Council – co-optee).

14 Minutes of the last meeting

The Minutes of the Panel meeting held on 23 June 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

15 Public Question Time

Mr Andrew Hill attended the meeting and asked the following questions:

- (1) My understanding is that the panel scrutinises the PCC, and delivery of his crime plan. In the PCC's crime plan he states (page7) that:
"In tackling the exploitation of vulnerable adults and children, we will not lose sight of the high levels of acquisitive and environmental crime that is also perpetrated by serious organised crime groups. Resources invested in this area will have an impact in reducing many of the crimes that concern the public most in their communities."

and (page 15) that "environmental crime" is a strategy to be "developed".

Given that Thames Valley Police have no dedicated environmental crime officer, and (by its own admission) little or no expertise in the complex law surrounding environmental crimes, what steps has the PCC actually taken to "develop" strategies on environmental crime, and how does this panel routinely monitor progress this specific type of serious crime that often "concern[s] the public most"?"

Answer

[The PCC replied that the anticipated strategy produced by his office which is still part of his Police and Criminal Justice Plan, is a four year plan. He was two years into the Plan, and he had never suggested that this work would have been developed by now. The PCC said he was working with TVP and there was a growing capacity to deal with fly tipping and other environmental crime in most areas.

On most occasions, fly tipping was a responsibility for local authorities who all had a good relationship with the police. There was a very good rural crime partnership on a local level which involved Environmental Health Officers, Community Safety Partnership officers and officers from local Neighbourhood Teams worked closely on fly tipping.

However, there were issues around fly tipping on an industrial scale and that was where the Force liaised with the Environmental Agency who may be the appropriate prosecuting authority. The Rural Crime Taskforce took the lead on these. The Rural Crime Strategy was developed by the Force which would include environmental crimes.

The Chair also replied that local authorities had their way of dealing with fly tipping.

The questioner also referenced wildlife crime which was also an environmental crime. The PCC replied that the Force did prosecute wildlife crimes and referred to the prosecution of the sale of whales' teeth.

The Panel agreed that a report on the work of the Rural Crime Task Force (to

include wildlife crimes) be added to the work programme.] [ACTION PCC/Scrutiny Officer]

- (2) Agenda item 11 notes the record 5% increase in police precepts across the UK. The PCC issued a statement to all council taxpayers saying that the maximum precept of £15 should be collected. A request above £15 is classed as “excessive” and would have triggered a referendum.

In the Royal Borough Of Windsor and Maidenhead, the PCC actively campaigned during the local elections to support the conservative party plan for warrant officer funding above the referendum trigger, with around £250k for an additional funding of 4 police officers through a “section 92” overpayment grant (Police Act 1996), and also for 8 officers in 2024-25, notwithstanding that his crime plan was already supposed to ensure adequate and safe policing in the Borough (indeed, in all areas).

Neither the PCC, nor Chief Constable, brought this matter to the crime panel’s attention for any scrutiny, nor were these payments openly disclosed to all council tax payers in the wider TVP consultation documents that led to the setting of the current budget.

What therefore is the maximum sum of money, and maximum number of officers, that this panel would accept being paid for by any council through a section 92 payment, and does it even accept the principle that richer areas can ‘top up’ their warrant officer provision using this mechanism to achieve a higher level of policing in richer areas than poorer areas (beyond the levels identified as objectively needed in the plan’s evidence base)?

Answer

[The Chair replied that the Panel discussed the budget in detail. There was a Panel Budget Task and Finish Group which scrutinised the PCC’s proposed budget and the Panel discussed the report of the Task and Finish Group. Section 92 payments were not discussed and the Panel was given assurance by the PCC that the budget was required to enable the Chief Constable to adequately police Thames Valley.

Reluctantly, in the times of a cost of living crisis, the Panel agreed the Police Precept. The Chair proposed that an item on Section 92 payments be added to the Panel’s work programme.] [ACTION: PCC/Scrutiny Officer]

Mr Andrew Hill added a supplementary comment that Section 92 funding, in effect bypasses the referendum figure and calls into question, that the Chief Constable determines where police resources were deployed in Thames Valley, particularly when a local authority area provides Section 92 funding for police resources in their area.

The PCC replied that the funding received had not been requested by his Office or by TVP, but the offer had been made by the local authority. Reference was made to the funding he provided for Community Safety Partnerships to work in partnership with TVP to tackle crime.

The PCC commented that the funding was not included in the Police budget but was included in the local authority's budget. The Police Precept budget was set before local authorities set their Council Tax budgets.]

16 Update on the Force Review progress

The report of the PCC provided an overview of the progress of the Force Review to date, and the remaining work to complete.

It explained the expected benefits of the changes proposed through the Force Review on Local Policing and in particular to Neighbourhood Policing, as well as the changes for Crime & Criminal Justice. The current savings position and plans for delivery of the agreed savings were also provided.

The PCC reported that the move to 5 Local Command Units would release resource for neighbourhood policing. Upon completion of the first three phases of the Force Review would deliver over £8m of savings.

Details of the structural changes and the impact on Thames Valley were reported.

The five-area model would consist of Local Command Units in Oxfordshire, Berkshire West, Berkshire East, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

A Member referred to the lack of detail provided in the report in relation to the configuration of the Local Command Units and that the first three phases of the Force Review had been completed with little information available for the Panel.

Members' Questions

- (1) A Member referred to the paragraph on crime and criminal justice which was brief and did not provide enough information on the new Crime and Criminal Justice structure which was required. The PCC was asked to provide a more substantial report to a future meeting.

[The PCC replied that the report focused on local policing and was what the Panel had requested, however, he was more than happy to bring a fuller report back on the new Crime and Criminal Justice structure, linking it in with the wider custody 2025 strategy which looks at the locations of custody, staffing scale, what other services could be co-located. A conversation had taken place with the Head of Criminal Justice at how people in custody could be looked after.] [ACTION : PCC]

- (2) A Member commented that neighbourhood policing had been effectively delivered in his area with the teams strengthened and higher visibility. Reference

is made to neighbourhood policing, community policing and local policing; it needed to be clearer on what these definitions were.

[The PCC reported that in Thames Valley, local policing would describe those officers who were locally geographically based and under a local commander and part of the local response teams. Neighbourhood policing are in neighbourhoods, to be preventative. Community policing were involved in the wider community engagement and would involve the use of Special Constables, working with retailers (tackling shoplifting).

(3) In relation to neighbourhood policing, the number of police officers had increased, but the number of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) had reduced. The PCC was asked whether there had been a cost benefit analysis and were there any Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to monitor performance after the implementation of the changes brought about by the review. The PCC was also asked to assure the Panel that there would be a crime reduction with this review.

[The PCC replied that the increase in constables in geographic neighbourhood teams was important. PCSO numbers have reduced. For this financial year, some of the funding for the vacant posts allowed the funding of police officers for this year. The intention was not to permanently reduce the establishment of PCSOs.

There was active recruitment taking place to replace the PCSOs who had predominantly left their roles to become police officers with the Uplift Programme. The PCC commented that he would like to tie PCSOs a little bit longer into their contracts, but this was difficult in a difficult market.

In relation to KPIs, there were several areas to look at. On crime, the PCC said he wished there would be a link to the change in organisational structure with a reduction in crime, however, you needed to look at the wider context of what was going on.

There would be KPIs around the finances, to monitor the budget to make sure that forecast savings were being made. Regular work was taking place with the Chief Finance Officers of the Force and of the Office of the PCC monitoring the current planned savings for this financial year and savings not yet identified. An important area of monitoring would be around the workforce, monitoring retention, sickness, stress, psychological sickness etc.]

(4) The PCC was asked about section 6 of the report and the target of £15m on savings. In the last five-year period, in terms of what Council Tax payers have had to pay and the level of increases compared to CPI and RPI. The Police precept increase has been significantly higher than both the CPI and RPI levels. Also, over the last 10 years, the number of households in the Thames Valley has increased by around 10% which means there are more households contributing into the pot. The PCC was asked if savings were being made and where was the increased

money going? Was there a shift away from reliance on the Government grant to the Council Tax residents have to pay more. This amounted to around £40-£50 more per household.

[The PCC referred to the challenges of inflation, pay rise increases, increase in the South East allowance, the costs of vehicles such as electric vehicles. There were significant work builds such as the new police station in Reading. Pension Costs had increased for the Force.]

Recruitment to the Rural Crime Task Force as part of the Uplift Programme, and the additional 80 police officers were funded by the Police precept increase. This helped with the growth in neighbourhood policing.

The funding formula had still not been revised which disadvantaged TVP. Reference was made to Durham where the funding per head was much higher than Thames Valley. Thames Valley deserved a better settlement and was in the bottom half of funded forces.

The PCC commented that like local authorities, difficult decisions around funding had to be made.]

(5) The PCC was asked about the data breaches which had occurred with Greater Manchester Police and the Police Service of Northern Ireland and how secure was TVP in this respect.

[The PCC replied that there were concerns nationally, however, good IT security work had been carried out in TVP with Hampshire. However, there was always the risk of data breaches with third parties.]

(6) The PCC was asked for his views on the Home Secretary's comment that all crimes would be investigated by the Police.

[The PCC commented that in Thames Valley, all burglaries were investigated by TVP. Any crime where there was a line of enquiry was investigated.]

RESOLVED - That the report of the PCC together with the responses given to Members' questions be noted.

17 Update report on police recruitment and retention in TVP along with ethnicity representation/positive action initiatives

The Panel was reminded that at its meeting in November 2022 an update was provided on police officer and recruitment. The report of the PCC provided a report which updated Members on police recruitment and retention in TVP, which included further detail and progress of Race/BAME initiatives.

Particular attention was given to the work carried out on retention in TVP, although retention was not just an issue for TVP. Police officers had a pay rise of 7% and

officers in TVP received a South East Allowance which was capped. However, TVP was competing with the Met Police where officers received a bigger salary.

Work had been carried out on retention measures such as providing free parking for officers at Police stations, rail discounts, and the proposal for Special Constables to receive a Council Tax discount and to be provided with local discounts.

Members' Questions

- (1) The PCC was asked whether a metric was maintained for the average length of service for response officers as this was low for the Met Police. Reference was made to the need for officers who turned up to investigate a crime or attend a public order incident were sufficiently experienced.

[The PCC replied that he completely agreed on the experience point. He did not have the average length of service to hand, but discussions did take place with the Chief Constable and his management team on workforce monitoring.]

The PCC commented that new recruits may decide that policing was not for them, but in fairness they put themselves forward to do a difficult and stressful job. The role of the Assessment Centre was to get the right people in post.]

- (2) The PCC was asked about a Ministry of Defence (MOD) Police intake and the advertisement of the trial programme and whether the quality and diversity of applicants was of a good standard and that the process was transparent and gave an equality of opportunity.

[The PCC replied that MOD police were recruited for specific purpose and those with firearm skills were particularly helpful in terms of the specialism skills. New recruits still had to go through the recruitment process and through vetting but recruits from the armed forces had a transferable skill set. The pool of applicants was big enough to ensure there was a competitive and transparent recruitment process.]

- (3) In relation to diversity, this was a strength, however, with Thames Valley having a BAME representation of 19.8%, TVP only had 6.5% BAME representation. The PCC was asked how would the culture of TVP change to attract more applicants and recruits from BAME communities?

[The PCC referred to the Positive Action Engagement Team, who worked with the Force around opportunity. Recruitment events were held in the evening, in areas traditionally where Police did not go. This was proactively proving that the Force wanted to recruit people who represented the Thames Valley Community. The PCC referred to individuals who had expressed a desire to join the Police but had been put off, by their parents and friends.]

Current serving Police Officers had engaged with potential recruits from the same ethnic background to offer reassurance of a career in the police force. Whilst this

could not be done for every recruit, it was important at that stage in the recruitment process to get potential recruits attracted and interested. It was important to recognise the differences in applicants and to support them through the recruitment process as well as part of retention.

The PCC also referred to the need to support officers from ethnic minority backgrounds during career progression in the Force. With the influx in new recruits, it would take a while for positive action work to result in progression in the Police hierarchy for newer recruits and representatives from BAME.]

(4) The PCC was asked about support which was given to women who came into the Force had and the difficulties with shifts, particularly for those with child care and caring responsibilities and those with cultural differences.

[The PCC gave an example of the parking initiative for officers at Police Stations, which was a practical measure which helped support women, who for example worked late shifts could not travel on public transport.

The PCC referred to various Staff Support Associations and Networks which had been designed to support diverse staff but also helped influence policy. There had been changes made to the maternity policy which had been influenced by the Thames Valley Womens Network.]

(5) The PCC was asked what progress was made on the Race Action Plan in relation to the recruitment and retention of racial minorities and what additional resources had been made available.

[The PCC replied that the Race Action Plan was a very important piece of work with the Assistant Chief Constable leading on this. There were internal resources being used. There were two aspects to this, the Independent Scrutiny and Oversight (ISO) Board which was part of the Action Plan and there was work carried out within the Force around recruitment and retention.

A governance review was taking place which looked more specifically around the ISO. A report was expected in the next month looking at the governance boards and there would be more resource in this area.]

(6) There was a lot of work taking place in making the working place more suitable for women and attracting BAME candidates. However, there was work taking place on paternity rights, shared parental responsibilities and being a dynamic work place. Work patterns perhaps needed to fit in with the culture / responsibilities of the individual.

[The PCC said he welcomed that there were a greater proportion of women joining policing, but in terms of police officers, it was still a male dominated organisation. It was important to make hours as flexible as possible, to enable the workplace to accommodate those who required those adjustments, however, these operational decisions of the Chief Constable needed to be balanced with the main objective of

the Police which was to provide an effective police force for the 3 million Thames Valley residents.]

(7) A Member referred to the importance of the perception of TVP and how interactions were important for a positive impression of dealing with the Police which would attract people to joining the police.

[The PCC agreed with the statement made and commented that officers in the neighbourhood teams would do some of that engagement. Nine times out of ten, TVP got it right and when they did not get it right, he was pleased with how the Chief Constable and his officers dealt with and made improvements in areas where things have gone wrong.]

(8) The Chair referred to the comment in the report that TVP now had the largest number of officers in the force's history, however, he would like the Home Office method of recording officers per 100,000 of the population to give a truer reflection on the level of police resources. The Chair also said he was pleased to see the increase in the number of applications going to 3,122 which was very encouraging.

[The PCC replied that he would be happy to use the officers per 100,000 of the population method when presenting police numbers.]

RESOLVED – That the report of the PCC be noted and the responses given to the questions asked by Panel Members.

18 Thames Valley Police Call Handling Overview

The Panel was provided with an update from the PCC on the Contact Management Centre which includes an update on the performance of "101" Calls and on-line reporting.

The Chair thanked Superintendent Bullivant and his staff for hosting a visit by several Panel Members to the Contact Management Centre.

The PCC reported that there had been problems making 999 calls from Samsung mobile phones as there had been an update to the firmware, where pressing the side button on the mobile phone, put the caller through to the emergency services. There had been hundreds of thousands of calls made from these devices which had inadvertently dialled 999. This caused a big issue to police handling centres nationwide.

There had been significant calls coming in, which had caused operational problems. The PCC referred to callers to 101 who called 999 when they could not get an answer.

The PCC provided an update on some of the developments which would be taking place to improve performance.

Members' Questions

1. The PCC was asked about the plans to recruit because of the deficiency in numbers and the programme to recruit would be implemented by July 2024. The PCC was asked if there was a way this implementation day could be brought forward to deal with the deficiency issues. In addition, the PCC was asked about the suitability of the shift patterns for staff and whether flexibility could be given to this.

[The PCC said he would take this away and have a look at the practicalities of bringing this date forward.]

A Member expressed his thanks for enabling Panel Members to visit the call handling centre and referred to the human element of this operation where staff worked remarkably well with limited resources. The pressure the call handlers worked under was immense and their work was stressful. They required care and attention, and the message should be passed onto the public to be more patient and understanding of the situation.

A Member referred to the offer given to Panel Members to sit and observe at a local control room which he would recommend.

2. A Member referred to a call he had made to 999 and which was referred to another force area because of the volume of calls and that this call was in relation to a live crime. The PCC was asked why were calls answered by non-Thames Valley call handlers?

[The PCC replied that calls could be referred to other force areas (Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire) during busy periods. There was an anomaly when calling 999 if the caller when using a mobile phone was close to the border of another force area, with that call referred to that force area.]

3. The PCC was asked about on-line reporting and how could this be increased to relieve the pressure on 101 and 999 calls. The PCC was asked if there were targets set to improve the use of on-line reporting. In addition, in relation to abandoned calls, there were also some calls which were disconnected. Was there any monitoring of these calls?

[The PCC acknowledged that there was an opportunity there with the possible use of the "chat box" service, using robotics. Thames Valley Police was part of the single on-line home system which was a national system and procured by the Metropolitan Police. The on-line system needed to be more user friendly.]

In relation to disconnected calls, there was a technical challenge such as the reliability of some of the systems. BT as the 999 operator, have been contacted regarding some connectivity issues which causes calls to be disconnected. This was outside the control of the Contact Management Centre.]

RESOLVED – That the report of the PCC be noted and the responses given to Members’s questions.

19 Update on Operation Deter

The PCC provided a report on Operation Deter which combined two approaches; a more robust criminal justice approach to adults found in possession of an offensive weapon, and for young people, earlier and intensive intervention through the Youth Offending Team Act Now programme which aimed to divert them from the criminal justice system and prevent further offending.

The PCC referred to the work on under 18s and referred to the work in Milton Keynes and Slough by the Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) on Achieving Change Together – Now (ACT) programme. He was hoping that the under 18s process in custody would operate across Thames Valley.

Initially, the PCC funded the YOTs, but this could not continue. For Milton Keynes YOT, the local authority had part funded the team as well as the PCC. It was hoped that funding could be received from the Home Office through the Homicide Prevention Fund. It needed to link in the YOTs and custody suites.

Work took place with Oxfordshire County Council for Oxfordshire and with Buckinghamshire Council for Buckinghamshire, but it was more complicated with Berkshire. For example, if you were in Loddon Valley which was in the Bracknell and Wokingham LPA, the greatest number of knife offences were likely to come in from Reading. Would Reading Borough Council fund a YOT where the custody suite was in Loddon Valley, Wokingham?

There needed to be a formula with Berkshire local authorities on funding and who was host it. The under 18s programme was valuable in terms of early intervention for people who have already carried a weapon. Engagement with young people is so important and it was important that there was partnership work with local authorities.

Members’ Questions

(1) A Member referred to a good initiative in terms of getting offenders to court quickly. However, there were problems with terminology, when an offensive weapon was not referred to as a bladed or sharply pointed article. There were too many people employed in the Criminal Justice System who have failed to make that leap in the terminology because it is easier to prove the offense relating to offensive weapons.

On the statistics in the report, there were 694 arrests across the whole of Thames Valley (July 2022 – 31 May 2023), however, there were still 327 cases outstanding. The PCC was asked if he would submit a more detailed report to a future meeting with greater detail on the statistics. Also, the PCC was asked

what did the term “straight to prison mean”. Was it from people who were on licence for carrying offensive weapons and effectively their licences have been withdrawn and they were now in prison?

[The PCC made the point that he could not directly get involved in the charging route area as it was operational. However, the PCC commented that the approach was right. The figures were for the first six months and he would be happy to provide further figures. [ACTION: PCC]

The PCC talked about timescales of getting prosecutions to court and admitted that a better outcome would occur if someone carrying an offensive weapon was put to the courts quickly. With regard to “straight to prison”, most of these would be those where there have been a number of verdict and sentencing on the same day.]

RESOLVED – That the report of the PCC be noted.

20 Formation of Task and Finish Groups - Strategy for Violence against Women and Girls and on Road Safety

The Panel was asked to give consideration to the Chair’s suggestion to the formation of two Task and Finish Groups to enable the Panel to scrutinise how the PCC holds the Chief Constable account in two areas:- Strategy for Violence against Women and Children and on Road Safety.

Terms of reference for the proposed Task and Finish Groups were attached for Members’ information.

Members were asked to contact the Scrutiny Officer to the Panel if they wished to become members of the Task and Finish Groups.

RESOLVED – (1) That approval be given to the setting up of two Task and Finish Groups - Strategy for Violence against Women and Children and on Road Safety.

(2) That approval be given to the draft terms of reference, and it agreed that the Road Safety Task and Finish Group reports back to the Panel in January 2024 and the Violence against Women and Children Task and Finish Group reports back to the Panel in March 2024.

(3) That the Chair, in consultation with the Scrutiny Officer, be given delegated authority to agree the membership of the Task and Finish Groups.

Subsequent to the meeting, the membership of the two Task and Finish Groups as follows:

Strategy for Violence against Women and Children

Cllr Aziz, Cllr Culverhouse, Cllr Poole and Pamela Mackenzie-Reilly (1 vacancy)

Road Safety

Cllr Brazier, Cllr McLean, Cllr Rowland, Cllr Shaik and Cllr Webber

21 Report of the Complaints Sub-Committee

The report of the Panel's Complaints Sub-Committee was noted.

22 Updates from the Chair of the Panel and the PCC, together with the Topical Issues report Members' Questions

(1) The PCC was asked for assurance that TVP turned up for theft (shoplifting) from shops in view of the recent media reports that Police did not attend shops when shoplifting had taken place and had been picked up by CCTV? Also, where there were threats involved this amounted to attempted robbery.

[The PCC replied that he agreed that there needed to be improvement in this respect and referred to the shoplifting incidents in Co-Op supermarkets where the Police had not attended 999 calls. He had meetings with big names in retail, including the Co-op and was excited at a possible Thames Valley wide Business / Crime partnership. He was looking at procuring a new system to improve reporting of such offences.]

The PCC acknowledged that he does not think the Police have always got the judgement right in terms of attendance and follow up. Most retailers had a centrally controlled CCTV system which would support investigations.]

A Member referred to juvenile offenders and how it was important to prevent this as there could be links to organised crime.

(2) A Member asked whether there was dialogue around addiction and cost of living being a principal cause of theft from shops. Local shops such as Co-ops needed assurance regarding thefts as there were threats to move local shops out of areas where there were high levels of thefts.

[The PCC said he would have conversations with local branch managers to offer that assurance. There was a major impact of shoplifting; on the employment of staff who feel threatened. Although there was a cost of living crisis, this was still a crime although there needed to be a proportional approach to the crime.]

The Topical Issues report was noted.

23 Work Programme

The Panel received the Work Programme and the following were added:

Report of the Road Safety Task and Finish Group added to January 2024 meeting.

Report of the Strategy for Violence against Women and Children added to March

2024 meeting.

Operation Deter – Detailed Report on Statistics on outcome of arrests added to March 2024 meeting.

New Crime and Criminal Justice structure, linking it in with the wider custody 2025 strategy

March 2024 meeting.

Work of the Rural Crime Task Force (to include wildlife crimes)

March 2024 meeting.

Section 92 payments

January 2024 meeting.

Anti-Social Behaviour To be added to a future meeting.

Report of the Police and Crime Panel

Report title: Fighting serious organised crime – County Lines and the protection of the vulnerable

Date: 3rd November 2023

Author and contact: Matthew Barber, Police & Crime Commissioner

Purpose of the report: As requested by the Panel

Recommendations: Information only

Executive Summary

This report sets out activity by the OPCC and Thames Valley Police in delivering the strategic priority of fighting serious organised crime, as set out in the Police & Criminal Justice Plan 2021-2025.

1. Background

1.1 The Police & Criminal Justice Plan highlights the fact the serious organised crime can come in many forms, but provides a particular focus on protecting vulnerable people. There are a number of specific areas for action set out in the plan:

- 1.1.1 Continuing to develop the Violence Reduction Unit, identifying potential victims and perpetrators and enabling multi-agency interventions
- 1.1.2 Reducing deaths from knife crime
- 1.1.3 Increasing the number of disruptions and successful prosecutions for serious organised crime (SOC)
- 1.1.4 Ensuring focus on SOC groups involved with acquisitive crime and exploitation
- 1.1.5 Ensuring regional resources are available to support local investigations
- 1.1.6 Supporting early intervention work to prevent young people becoming either perpetrators or victims of crime

1.2 These areas sit alongside a number of wider considerations and activities conducted by Thames Valley Police and the OPCC.

2. Forms of serious organised crime

2.1 The National Crime Agency has identified three key areas of threats from serious organised crime: Exploitation of the vulnerable; Impact on communities; Economic harm. Several areas of criminal activity are recognised within these areas.

2.2 Exploitation of the Vulnerable:

- Child Sexual Abuse
- Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking
- Organised Immigration Crime

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2.3 Impact of SOC on Communities:

- Drugs
- Firearms
- Organised Acquisitive Crime

2.4 Harm to the UK's Economy and Institutions:

- Cyber Crime
- Fraud
- Money Laundering

2.5 This report is not exhaustive in covering each of these areas of crime, but attempts to highlight some of the key strands specifically relating to exploitation of the most vulnerable.

2.6 It must nevertheless be noted that significant work has also been undertaken in with regards to the wider issues, including fraud and serious acquisitive crime. In terms of the latter the Rural Crime Team have made great efforts to tackle the trade in stolen vehicles and machinery, supporting the introduction of new legislation. Similarly work to tackle issues such as retail crime and catalytic converter theft need to be viewed through the lens of serious organised crime.

Violence Reduction Unit (VRU)

3.1 Established in 2019 and funded by the Home Office, the aim of the VRU our aim is to reduce the number of people affected by Serious Violence across the Thames Valley, working with our communities.

3.2 The VRU is a partnership body (not a legal entity in its own right) supported by a central programme team. It brings together representation from policing, local authority community safety, children's services and social care, prisons and probation, education, youth offending and the voluntary and community sector.

3.3 From its inception the PCC has been the Senior Responsible Officer to the Home Office for funding purposes, but the team has been staffed mainly by Thames Valley Police Officers, along with individuals seconded from other partner organisations.

3.4 As Home Office funding comes to an end the VRU partnership is embarking on a new period of embedding the work as business as usual. To this purpose the PCC has appointed a new Head of Violence Reduction who now leads the VRU, with staff forming part of the OPCC structure.

3.5 The activities of the VRU are many and varied can perhaps be broken down into three broad areas:

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- 3.5.1 Diversion – The VRU co-ordinates funding and referrals for numerous organisations across Thames Valley that seek to divert young people from becoming involved in criminal activity or seeking to provide an escape from the cycle of offending.
- 3.5.2 Enforcement – Additional Home Office funding for overtime enforcement operations has been managed through the VRU which has enabled additional funding for operational policing. The VRU has also developed the Hot Spot app used by officers across the Force for focused patrols to tackle violent crime.
- 3.5.3 Data – The Thames Valley Together data project seeks to bring together information not just from policing, but also from local authorities and health partners to highlight risks of offending and victimisation in order to prevent serious violence. This project is still managed with TVP in order to mitigate data sharing issues.

Exploitation

4.1 Exploitation is a form of abuse where someone is forced or coerced into doing things for the benefit of others. It can often be a gradual process as people are groomed and introduced to new ideas, behaviours and activities, making these appear normal and acceptable. These behaviours and activities may seem exciting or give someone something they are looking for – including money, gifts or a sense of belonging. People may not recognise that they are being exploited until their situation becomes very serious. Exploitation can take many forms, can take place in a range of situations, and can involve many groups of people.

Common forms of exploitation:

4.2 **Criminal exploitation** – being forced to take part in criminal activities such as transporting or selling illegal items (e.g. drugs); participating in violent or acquisitive crime; or grooming and exploiting other people.

4.3 **Debt bondage** – present in many forms of exploitation. People may accumulate ‘debts’ during exploitation, such as payments for transport and accommodation, or ‘free’ drugs and money. People may be forced to carry out work, favours or criminal activities to pay off their debts and may be threatened with violence if they do not.

4.4 **Drug trafficking** – being forced to transport drugs to areas where they can be sold and distributed. This can involve county lines activities such as cuckooing (where drug gangs transport drugs to towns and cities along ‘deal lines’). Drug trafficking can be a form of modern slavery and drug trafficking if people are forced to travel to take part in the transportation and sale of drugs.

4.5 **Financial exploitation** – being deceived or coerced into handing over monetary funds or assets to others. This can happen through scams, fraud, blackmail, or through accruing debts.

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4.6 Labour exploitation – being forced to work for little or no pay, often in poor conditions. People experiencing labour exploitation may have limited freedom and may be forced to live with other workers. Labour exploitation is a form of modern slavery.

4.7 Modern slavery – having control or ownership over another person and using this power to exploit them. Modern slavery can include human trafficking, enslavement, domestic servitude and forced labour.

4.8 Radicalisation – the process through which people come to support increasingly extreme political, religious or other ideals. This can lead them to support violent extremism or terrorism.

4.9 Sexual exploitation – a form of sexual abuse where people are encouraged, manipulated or forced to participate in sexual acts. They may be threatened with violence and may be groomed by offers of affection, money or gifts.

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

5.1 This is a form of child abuse where children are abused for money, power or status.

The abuser takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person into criminal activity, often related to drug supply:

5.1.1 in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or

5.1.2 for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator.

5.2 It can still be exploitation, even if the child appears to consent to the activity. It is often accompanied by violence, threats of violence (perhaps towards relatives or siblings) or the use of inducements. The children involved may not feel they have an alternative, but are often labelled as “having made a lifestyle choice”. They may have thought that the gang or group offers safety, status and protection from others.

Child Criminal Exploitation can take many forms:

5.3 Peer-on-peer exploitation: Young people are forced or coerced into criminal activity by peers or associates. It may be associated with gang activity, but not always.

5.4 Gang related exploitation: As part of the gang culture a young person will be criminally exploited, perhaps as a punishment or for a perpetrator to gain status within the gang.

5.5 Organised exploitation: Young people are passed through networks and between towns and cities where they may be forced/coerced into criminal. Often this is part of an Organised Crime group’s “County Lines”

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There are often many stages of exploitation, which are important for police officers and partners to understand. Officers should consider and understand the following techniques used to groom a victim and the four stages this grooming typically follows:

- 5.5.1 Targeting stage – the groomer targets a particular young person, glamorising the gang lifestyle and inviting them to participate and give them status
 - 5.5.2 Experience stage – the groomer trains them up and gets them used to the lifestyle by offering gifts, praise and including them in activities and testing their loyalties, such as giving them a weapon to look after.
 - 5.5.3 Hooked stage – the groomer makes them feel they are part of the gang, even if they are still being groomed. They may be given a bigger role or responsibility, become engaged in thrill seeking, risky or criminal acts
 - 5.5.4 Trapped stage – the exploiters true motives become clear. Threats, assaults, blackmail, humiliation, addiction and exploitation become frequent.
- 5.6 Identifying the victim/offender status of the child during the early stages of an investigation can be difficult to establish. However regardless as to whether a child is an offender or a victim, the very fact that he/she is involved in serious organised crime with all the associated risks of drug misuse, weapons, violence etc. places that child at significant risk of harm. Under the terms of s47 of the Children’s Act 1989, the local authority is obliged to act when a child at risk of significant harm is identified. Using the phrase “child at significant risk of harm” will help other agencies to understand the concerns being raised and the need for them to respond under s47 of the Act.

Child abuse

- 6.1 Child abuse is the generic term encompassing all situations of the ill treatment of children, including serious physical and sexual assaults, as well as cases where the standard of care does not reach reasonable expectations (neglect) and where psychological harm is caused. It includes Child Sexual Exploitation.
- 6.2 In many instances of child abuse the perpetrator is likely to be a family member or someone known to the child. In some cases children may not understand that they are being abused. The complex dynamics of abuse mean that some individuals develop an attachment to the person harming them. This can sometimes make identifying abuse difficult and result in the victim playing down and/or denying the abuse.
- 6.3 The Police are under a statutory obligation to safeguard and promote the welfare of children under section 11 of the Children’s Act 2004 by working with other agencies. The nine Local Safeguarding Children's Boards oversee local arrangements to protect children in the Thames Valley. The Statutory Guidance on ‘Working Together to

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Safeguard Children 2018' provides advice and guidance about how all agencies should keep children safe.

6.4 Child abuse takes many different forms and officers should follow the relevant Operational Guidance to ensure that appropriate steps are taken to keep children safe. Officers should maintain professional curiosity and consider all the circumstances when making enquiries into the welfare of a child. Any subsequent assessment will be carried out by Children's Social Care, often in conjunction with officers from CAIU.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

7.1 Learning that has come from dealing with victims of Child Sexual Exploitation (CESE) suggests that involvement in offending is an indicator of CSE. A number of victims of CSE had spent time in custody prior to and during the time they were abused. Please use the links below to navigate to the appropriate section of the page

Signs and behaviour generally seen in children who are already being exploited:

- 7.1.1 A child who carries two mobile phones can be an indicator of living two lives as opposed to an adult who may carry both work and personal phones.
- 7.1.2 Missing from home or care.
- 7.1.3 Physical injuries.
- 7.1.4 Drug or alcohol misuse.
- 7.1.5 Involvement in offending.
- 7.1.6 Repeat sexually-transmitted infections, pregnancy and terminations.
- 7.1.7 Absent from school.
- 7.1.8 Change in physical appearance.
- 7.1.9 Evidence of sexual bullying and/or vulnerability through the internet and/or social networking sites.
- 7.1.10 Estranged from their family.
- 7.1.11 Receipt of gifts from unknown sources.
- 7.1.12 Recruiting others into exploitative situations.
- 7.1.13 Poor mental health.
- 7.1.14 Self-harm.
- 7.1.15 Thoughts of or attempts at suicide.

The following are typical vulnerabilities in children prior to abuse:

- 7.2.1 Living in a chaotic or dysfunctional household (including parental substance use, domestic violence, parental mental health issues, parental criminality).
- 7.2.2 History of abuse (including familial child sexual abuse, risk of forced marriage, risk of 'honour'- based violence, physical and emotional abuse and neglect).
- 7.2.3 Recent bereavement or loss.



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- 7.2.4 Gang association either through relatives, peers or intimate relationships (in cases of gang associated CSE only).
 - 7.2.5 Attending school with young people who are sexually exploited.
 - 7.2.6 Learning disabilities.
 - 7.2.7 Unsure about their sexual orientation or unable to disclose sexual orientation to their families.
 - 7.2.8 Friends with young people who are sexually exploited.
 - 7.2.9 Homeless.
 - 7.2.10 Lacking friends from the same age group.
 - 7.2.11 Living in a gang neighbourhood.
 - 7.2.12 Living in residential care.
 - 7.2.13 Living in hostel, bed and breakfast accommodation or a foyer.
 - 7.2.14 Low self-esteem or self-confidence.
 - 7.2.15 Young carer.
- 7.3 Actions for custody where CSE is suspected: A number of these factors may become apparent during the risk assessment of a child detainee. Where there is anything disclosed by a detainee, or there are indicators that give rise to suspecting a detainee may be the victim of or subject to CSE, the Custody Officer should bring this to the attention of the OIC.

Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery

- 8.1 With both modern slavery and human trafficking, men, women and children are forced into a situation through the use of violence (or threat of violence), deception or coercion. Modern Slavery encompasses Human Trafficking, Slavery, Servitude, Forced and Compulsory Labour and is often committed by organised crime groups.
- 8.2 Victims are often subject to multiple forms of exploitation although four main types of exploitation are associated with modern slavery:
- 8.2.1 Forced Labour;
 - 8.2.2 Criminal Exploitation;
 - 8.2.3 Sexual Exploitation;
 - 8.2.4 Domestic Servitude.
- 8.3 For an adult to be a victim of Modern Slavery there must be an action (recruitment, transfer), a means (violence, coercion) and purpose (self-gain, criminality) for exploitation. For child victims it is not necessary to prove the means, as a child is unable to provide consent.
- 8.4 How might a victim be identified? There are a series of behaviours or indications that somebody may be a victim of Modern Slavery. It is not always easy to recognise a victim of modern slavery and a victim may not consider themselves to be a victim

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- 8.4.1 Living and working in the same place.
 - 8.4.2 Housed with multiple people in a cramped living space.
 - 8.4.3 Working long hours with little or no pay.
 - 8.4.4 No identification or travel documents – these may be withheld by an employer.
 - 8.4.5 Signs of physical and or psychological abuse, including post-traumatic stress disorder.
 - 8.4.6 The third party insists on being present or interpreting for the individual.
 - 8.4.7 Non-verbal communication and body language between potential victims and suspects.
 - 8.4.8 Victim may initially present as a potential suspect due to forced criminality.
- 8.5 It takes courage for a victim to disclose their abuse as they may fear the consequences. In any investigation of modern slavery, the welfare of the victim(s) and witness(es) and preservation of any evidence is crucial. This should be foremost in the investigating officer's mind.
- 8.6 Where someone is suspected of being a victim of modern slavery then they should be considered a child or adult at risk and the relevant child or adult at risk operational guidance followed. The Force will seek support from relevant partner agencies and address any immediate safeguarding requirements. A referral may then be made into the National Referral Mechanism in line with the operational guidance.
- 8.7 The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is a process used to identify and record victims of human trafficking and modern slavery. When referred into the NRM a decision is made by the national team as to whether the person is a victim of MS or trafficking and will therefore be accepted into the mechanism to have support and accommodation to free them from their situation.

Communications: True Costs campaign

- 9.1 The true costs of drug misuse are significant and far reaching, from child exploitation and other criminality, to health and environmental. However, not everyone who uses illegal drugs knows the reality of how they are produced and supplied. As most people do not see the awful consequences observed by the police there is an opportunity to shine a light on this. The true costs campaign seeks to provide facts to highlight the consequences of such illegal activity.
- 9.2 You can find the True Costs webpage at <https://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/police-forces/thames-valley-police/areas/c/true-costs/>
- 9.3 Prior to the pandemic, Thames Valley Police developed and executed a behaviour change campaign strategy and arrived at an approach that informs and educates people on the true costs of illegal drug use. The Force had the goal of challenging the social acceptability of drug misuse in the short term with the goal of reducing levels of illegal drug use in the long term.



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9.4 Following the pandemic, TVP are delivering True Costs messaging around general drug misuse in the night time economy rather than focusing on a specific drug type. This followed the official relaunch of the True Costs campaign in 2022 in which we intend to focus on the reality of child exploitation.

9.5 The campaign speaks plainly, avoiding judgmental language and gets straight to the point. We want to provide people with the facts and let them make informed choices; let them come to their own conclusions. We hope that by informing the public conversation about the true costs of choosing to buy and consume drugs illegally, some people may choose not to do so.

Governance

10.1 Force performance is monitored through the Performance and Accountability Meetings (PAM) and the Liaison Meetings with the Chief Constable.

10.2 The VRU continues to develop and become business as usual within the OPCC. The Partnership has been strengthened with Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service taking on chairmanship of the Strategic Board.

10.3 Work continues through Operation Deter and other activities to focus on reducing knife crime. Despite a number of tragic incidents analysis by HMICFRS shows that in the latest figures to be published in October 2023, Thames Valley is a positive outlier nationally for homicide.

10.4 Measuring disruptions can be a subjective matter, but work has taken place across the Regional Organised Crime Unit (ROCU) network nationally to standardise these assessments. The PCC has also proposed work across the South East in order to standardise assessments across Forces. Disruptions defined as “Major” increased from 33 to 59 in the year to July 2023 compared with the previous year.

10.5 Through Operation Deter and the wider work of the Violence Reduction Unit a wide range of diversionary activities are funded to prevent young people from becoming perpetrators of crime. This is in addition to the services provided by Victims First for the victims of exploitation.

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Home Office guidance on Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/criminal-exploitation-of-children-and-vulnerable-adults-county-lines/criminal-exploitation-of-children-and-vulnerable-adults-county-lines>

What is county lines exploitation?

“County lines” is a violent and exploitative form of drug distribution. A common feature of county lines is the exploitation of children, young people and vulnerable adults who are instructed to deliver and/or store drugs, and associated money or weapons, to dealers or drug users, locally or in other counties.

The Home Office published updated guidance which is primarily aimed at frontline staff who work with children, young people and vulnerable adults. This includes professionals working in-education, health, adult social care, children’s social care and early help/family support, housing, the benefits system, policing, prisons, probation and youth justice, multi-agency partnerships, related partner organisations, for example in the voluntary sector.

The signs and vulnerabilities associated with county lines exploitation may present differently to different professionals and safeguarding processes will vary depending on local contexts. However, the information provided here is intended to be useful to all. This document provides links to other resources to assist professionals to consider in further detail how this guidance relates to their role and responsibilities. It may also be helpful for carers, parents and others in the community, although they are not the primary audience.

child criminal exploitation

“Child criminal exploitation is common in county lines and occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child criminal exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.” (Serious Violence Strategy)

Criminal exploitation of children is broader than just county lines and includes, for instance, children forced to work on cannabis farms or to commit theft. However, many of the characteristics of county lines exploitation will be present in other forms of child criminal exploitation. Likewise, victims of county lines may also experience other overlapping forms of exploitation, such as sexual, in addition to criminal.

Forms and methods of exploitation

County lines exploitation can be perpetrated by individuals or groups of any gender or nationality and can appear unsophisticated or organised. It is typified by some form of power imbalance, which perpetrators use to force, coerce, groom and/or entice victims into county lines activity. They can employ several methods to do so, such as:

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- offering an exchange – carrying drugs in return for something, such as money, clothes, drugs, status, protection or perceived friendship, a sense of belonging or identity, or affection;
- physical violence or threats of violence – used to intimidate and punish victims and their families and can involve weapons, including knives and firearms;
- abduction or kidnapping – sometimes victims are forcibly moved and held in a location away from home;
- emotional abuse or psychological coercive control – by manipulating, threatening, controlling or monitoring the movements of the victim;
- sexual abuse and exploitation – this can be experienced by all genders;
- blackmail – by forcing victims to commit a crime so they can hold it over them and threaten to report it if they do not comply;
- the use of social media, messaging apps, gaming sites and other online platforms – including marketplace websites and smart TVs to target and communicate with victims. These modes are used by exploiters to falsely build online trusted relationships, or to post fraudulent job adverts which seem legitimate, or to cyberstalk victims in order to groom, entrap and coerce them into county lines activity;
- “cuckooing” (also known as “forced home invasion”) – a tactic used by criminals, typically drug dealers, to take over the homes of vulnerable individuals, such as care leavers or those with addiction, physical or mental health issues, and use the property as a base for criminal activity. This is a common characteristic of the county lines business model and can occur in a range of settings such as rental and private properties, student accommodation, prisons, and commercial properties;
- coerced internal concealment (also known as “plugging”) – the practice whereby a child or vulnerable adult is controlled or coerced into concealing drugs internally as a method of transportation to avoid detection. Drugs or sim cards are usually concealed within a condom or similar packaging and inserted into a bodily orifice (rectum or vagina) using lubricant, or swallowed;
- debt bondage – a form of entrapment when a victim owes money to their exploiters and is made to repay their debt, either financially or through another means such as transporting drugs. The exploiter may groom the victim by initially providing money or goods which the victim will then be made to pay back. The exploiter may also deliberately manufacture a debt, for example by staging a robbery of drugs or cash in the victim’s possession in order to extort money from families or to ensure the victim will continue to perform tasks for them. The debt may also be inherited from parents and siblings; and

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- financial exploitation – financial exploitation can take many forms. In this context, we use the term to describe exploitation which takes place for the purpose of money laundering. This is when criminals target children and adults at risk and take advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate, or deceive them into facilitating the movement of illicit funds. This can include physical cash and/or payments through financial products, such as bank and cryptocurrency accounts.

Who is vulnerable to county lines exploitation?

Any child, young person or vulnerable adult could be a victim of county lines exploitation as exploiters continue to adapt who they target to avoid detection.

- age: 15-17 year olds make up the majority of the vulnerable people involved in county lines but children of primary school age and adults are also known to be targeted (National County Lines Coordination Centre).
- sex/gender: people of all genders can be exploited. Women and girls may be exploited to perform different roles and may experience other forms of harm alongside and so are often under-identified as victims of criminal exploitation – professionals should not make assumptions when working with a girl or young woman about the intervention required.
- ethnicity: people from all ethnicities and nationalities are targeted and the demographics of victims of exploitation vary across England and Wales. In some areas, there is an over-representation of people from black and mixed ethnic groups, while in others, victims are mainly white.
- location: county lines are widespread nationally, in rural and urban areas, and while they can involve the movement of drugs across county borders from one area of the UK to another, some lines supply the drugs market locally, within the same town, city or county in which they originate. County lines grooming can take place in a range of settings, including in homes, public spaces, schools and universities, prisons and youth offender institutions as well as online.

Some of the factors that may heighten a person's vulnerability include:

- having contact with the criminal justice system
- having experience of neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse/exploitation or a lack of a safe/stable home environment, now or in the past (including domestic abuse, parental substance misuse or parental criminal involvement) – trauma, including adverse childhood experiences, can negatively impact on an individual's ability to develop trusted relationships or access support services;
- social isolation or social difficulties – the lack of a support network can mean someone is less able to get help;

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- economic vulnerability – offers of material possessions or money for victims or their family may be more readily accepted out of a feeling of necessity and lack of legitimate financial alternatives;
- homelessness or insecure accommodation status – there is a lack of a safe environment to provide security and privacy;
- connections with other people in gangs – some individuals are targeted through family or friends who are already involved in criminal activity themselves and sometimes a drug debt owed by them is passed on to peers or family members;
- having a physical or learning disability, or being neurodivergent – victims may be less able to recognise they are being exploited, or less able to communicate it or access support;
- having mental health issues – exploiters may target poor emotional wellbeing or low self-esteem;
- having substance misuse issues
- being in or leaving care
- being excluded from mainstream education, and/or a pupil at an alternative provision such as a pupil referral unit – factors influencing a child’s exclusion may indicate they are exposed to exploitation, while being disengaged from meaningful activity and peers can evoke feelings of disenfranchisement and, for those with a reduced timetable or not attending school at all, time spent unsupervised can offer opportunities for exploitation; and
- insecure immigration status – for example, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and refugees may have a number of vulnerability factors that can increase their exposure to exploitation, including social/cultural isolation on arrival to the country and potentially links to organised crime from their journey.

Signs to look out for

Exploitation through county lines often leaves signs. Any sudden changes in a person’s lifestyle should be discussed with them.

Some potential signs of county lines exploitation include, but are not limited to:

Behaviours

- going missing from school or home, an unwillingness to explain their whereabouts and/or being found in areas they have no obvious connections with (out-of-area);
- school exclusion(s) and/or a significant decline in school attendance, results or performance;

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- self-harm or significant changes in emotional well-being, personality or behaviour;
- anti-social behaviour or involvement in other criminality; and
- use of drug and county lines-related slang (see further resources).

Possessions

- unexplained acquisition of money, clothes, or mobile phones;
- excessive receipt of texts/phone calls and/or having multiple sim cards or handsets – this could be a ‘burner phone’, often an older model which uses an unregistered sim card, but it may also be a smart phone which can utilise web-based apps without a phone number;
- carrying or storing weapons;
- misuse of substances or possession of drugs or drug paraphernalia such as discarded needles, scales, small snappy bags or cling film;
- possession of train tickets for unusual train journeys; and
- possession of a rucksack or a bag that they are very attached to or will not put down.

Relationships

- relationships with controlling/older individuals or groups; and
- isolation from usual peers or social networks.

Appearance

- suspicion of physical assault/unexplained injuries – these tend to be visible but minor injuries which are issued as a threat, such as cigarette burns or small cuts, but can also be much more serious life-threatening injuries, such as stab wounds.

Signs to look out for online include:

- spending increased or unusually excessive amounts of time online day and night;
- building inappropriate relationships online or appearing anxious or secretive about their online activities and who they are communicating with;
- unexpected or excessive sharing of personal information online, such as full name, address, or phone number;
- experiencing bullying, harassment or threats online; and
- receiving or sending money, gifts or gaming tokens/coins to someone online.

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Signs of a cuckooed property include:

- the presence of unfamiliar individuals coming and going from the property at all hours or an increase in key fob activity;
- an increase in foot traffic or loitering in the area around the property or takeaway deliveries at unusual hours;
- an increase in noise and disturbance levels, including late-night parties or arguments or other signs of anti-social behaviour such as littering around the property;
- damage to the property, such as broken windows or doors; and
- threats or intimidation towards other residents or neighbours.

Signs of coerced internal concealment include:

- refusing to consume food or drink;
- being in possession of lubricants, condoms or similar packaging;
- a dishevelled appearance with stained clothing; and
- being physically unwell.

Signs of financial exploitation or a debt bondage include:

- receiving large or unexplained sums of cash or deposits in a bank account;
- unusual financial transactions or being made to make financial transactions they do not understand;
- a new preoccupation with earning money;
- asking for money or stealing money/items to pay back a debt; and
- opening new accounts with banks or crypto exchanges
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Report of the Police and Crime Panel

Report title: TVP VAWG Education Campaign

Date: 3 November 2023

Author and contact: Sarah Sharpe, TVP Deputy Head of Corporate Communications

Purpose of the report: As requested by the Panel

Recommendations: Information only

Executive Summary

Thames Valley Police is working with Lisa Squire, mother of murdered student Libby Squire, and specialist agency TMC, to produce a PSHE education package for 14-16 year olds. A potential second phase will deliver a broader awareness campaign.

Background

In November 2022 the TVP communications team made contact with Lisa Squire, a Buckinghamshire resident, to ask if she would consider working with us on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). Lisa's daughter Libby, a student at Hull University, was raped and murdered [by Pawel Relowicz in 2019](#). She had been on a night out with friends but had been refused entry into a nightclub and went home in a taxi on her own.

In conversations with Lisa we looked at how we could share the messaging she was already taking out to schools, ad-hoc, into a comprehensive educational package. It would focus on two key messages: 1) Look after your friends and 2) report non-contact sexual offences. After being charged with Libby's murder, it was found Relowicz had been [exposing himself to women](#), following them home and masturbating at their properties, and stealing personal items. Lisa is an engaging and passionate advocate on women's safety, and we wanted to support her to get her story and powerful messages out to a wider audience.

We took this proposal to the TVP VAWG Board and were awarded funding from the Safer Spaces lead C/Supt Jim Weems to begin a Phase 1. This phase was to develop the messaging, campaign identity, hold school focus groups and convene a Project Advisory Team. This panel would be made up of professionals and experts from across the UK who would help test our thinking and proposals.

National and local picture

The rape and murder of Sarah Everard provoked an intense period of public and force scrutiny on VAWG. Both Relowicz, and Wayne Couzens displayed an escalation in non-contact sexual offences before their horrendous crimes against Libby and Sarah. This education campaign aims to encourage young people to report non-contact sexual offences by explaining how the intelligence from their reports can help police identify hotspots and identify perpetrators.

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Lisa is a regular spokesperson on BBC Radio 4 Woman’s Hour, LBC, Good Morning Britain and others. As a separate voice to policing, she regularly promotes the message of young people looking out for each other, and is robust in response when asked if this message is transferring the accountability onto young people rather than focusing on making spaces safer/stopping potential offenders. Lisa is a strong advocate of policing and is public with her views on the positive experiences she has had with police teams.

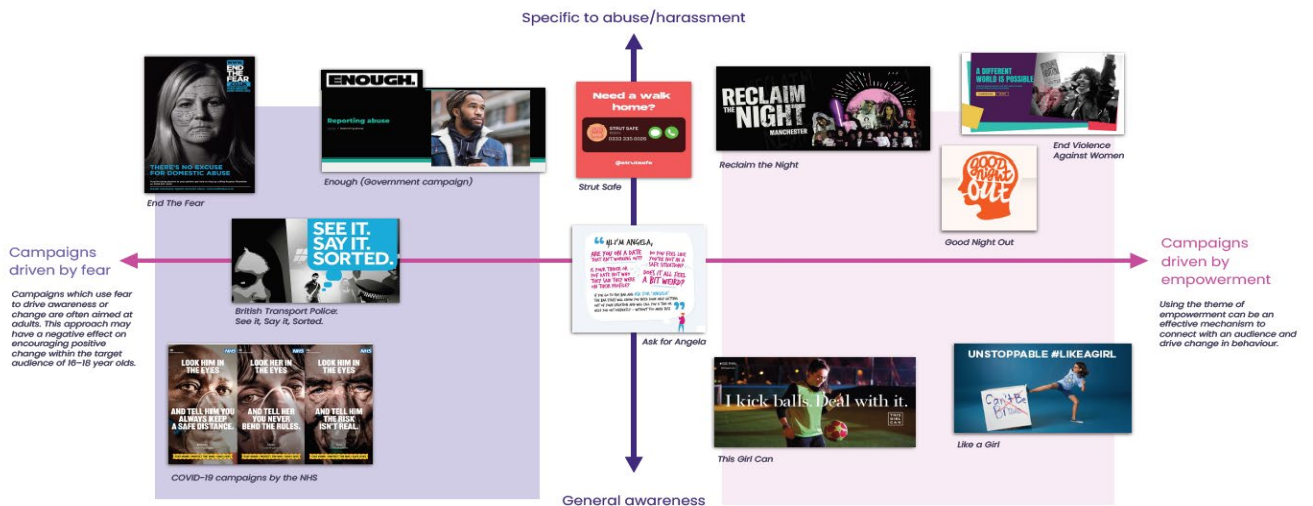
Work so far

In early 2023 we selected TMC, a specialist agency, to work with us on the programme. TMC has delivered school education packages for major brands and has strong links in the education sector. Since February we have worked with TMC to:

- Produce an audit of existing campaigns and materials
- Hold focus groups at four Thames Valley schools to get feedback on our plans (schools were a mix of rural/urban and socio-economic circumstances)
- Hold a Project Advisory Team meeting to ask a range of experts their thoughts on our programme. The Board includes:
 - o Lisa Squire
 - o Professor [David Gadd](#), Professor of Criminology
 - o Kevin Fender, dissertation author ‘*Tracking Indecent Exposure Offenders for Potential Predictors of Future Violence against Woman and Girl Offending: A 3-year Offending History of Indecent Exposure Offenders*’
 - o Jenny Fox, PSHE Association
 - o PC Rob Kelly, TVP Schools Liaison
 - o Sarah Sharpe and Mel Reedman, TVP Communications
- Other members unable to attend the first session but on the PAT are:
 - o Estelle Morris MP, former Secretary of State for Education and Skills
 - o [Gina Martin](#), gender equality campaigner

TMC has also worked on developing a campaign identity, which is still in progress.

Public Awareness Campaigns Landscape.





Report of the Police and Crime Panel

Next Steps

We are awaiting the final school focus group to take place this October. Once complete, a final report will be drawn up and will feed into these workstreams:

- Review of campaign messages against focus group report
- Reporting – explore working with [Fearless](#) and [StreetSafe](#)
- Production of a lesson plan in conjunction with the PSHE association, upload and store on PSHE website which has access to 65,000 teachers nationwide
- Review of campaign identity against focus group feedback

In January 2024 we will:

1. Test the lesson plan with a school
2. Hold a second Project Advisory Team meeting
3. Roll-out the education campaign across our area

Teacher/pupil surveys and download metrics from the PSHE Association will aid evaluation.

Onwards in 2024 - corporate sponsorship

We have agreed with TVP Procurement we can begin early conversations to seek corporate sponsorship to widen this work to reach a wider audience of young people, and their parents.

With corporate sponsorship we would be able to:

- Host a campaign website and supporting materials, linked to the education campaign
- Produce a film with Lisa to outline her messages
- Deliver a live broadcast of a talk with Lisa from a school, but broadcast to other schools in the region
- Create a virtual environment students can work within to identify risk and prompt discussion on safety

Working with national partners

We recently briefed the National Police Chiefs' Council, Ministry of Justice and Home Office on this work. They were very interested in its aims, and we will be carrying on conversations with them about how we could potentially link up our work with their national campaign materials.



Report of the Police and Crime Panel

Conclusion

This education campaign is being designed to be versatile and relevant so that it can be used by any school and promoted by any police force, reaching young people both in and outside our policing area.

Lisa Squire is an eloquent, engaging and passionate campaigner with a powerful message. By helping her to amplify this through a formal education package and campaign we aim to educate and inform young people, keeping them safe, and encouraging them to report.



Report of the Police and Crime Panel

Report title: Update on Thames Valley CCTV Partnership

Date: 3rd November 2023

Author and contact: April Smith, OPCC Partnerships Delivery Manager

Purpose of the report: As requested by the Panel

Recommendations: Information only

Executive Summary

In April 2022, the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) set out his strategic vision for a Thames Valley CCTV Partnership. In this model, Thames Valley Police (TVP) would own the system and equipment for public space CCTV, would be responsible for the maintenance, and would employ the staff.

Since this time, there has been considerable progress made. Phase 1 of delivering the Thames Valley CCTV Partnership is currently underway and involves upgrading the CCTV systems for Slough and Milton Keynes City, with both areas to be monitored from a Milton Keynes Command Suite. The supplier CDS has been awarded the contract to undertake this upgrade with the works due to commence imminently. From 1 January 2024, the Milton Keynes Command Suite will be responsible for monitoring the cameras across Milton Keynes City and Slough.

Phase 2 of delivering the Thames Valley CCTV Partnership involves Oxfordshire local authorities and over the Summer months, a consultation took place to gather feedback on the operating model to be delivered (whether Oxfordshire will have its own Command Suite or whether their cameras will also be integrated into the Milton Keynes Command Suite) and the funding formula to be used to calculate the annual local authority revenue contributions. The feedback from local authorities is currently being collated and will be included in a paper that will go to the TVP CCTV Programme Board in December 2023 so that recommendations can be made to the Chief Constable and PCC.

In the meantime, the CCTV Project Team will continue to engage with Buckinghamshire Council who have decided not to join the Thames Valley CCTV Partnership at this time and will now be monitoring all CCTV for Buckinghamshire from their Control Room in High Wycombe, as well as local authorities in Berkshire who will be included in Phase 3 of this programme.

1. Background

1.1 In April 2022, the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) set out his strategic vision for a Thames Valley CCTV Partnership. In this model, Thames Valley Police (TVP) would own the system and equipment for public space CCTV, would be responsible for the maintenance, and would employ the staff.



Report of the Police and Crime Panel

1.2 The PCC recognises that CCTV exists primarily (although not exclusively) for the benefit of policing and the wider interests of community safety, and that it does not generally form part of the core function of local authorities. It is therefore considered appropriate that policing shoulders the lion's share of the responsibility for providing the capability for CCTV.

1.3 However, TVP cannot achieve this vision alone. The PCC is therefore in the process of establishing a Thames Valley CCTV Partnership to deliver an improved, more consistent provision for CCTV across the Thames Valley, supported by ongoing financial contributions and engagement from local authorities.

2. Benefits of a Thames Valley CCTV Partnership

2.1 The Thames Valley CCTV Partnership is expected to bring a number of benefits for participating local authorities including:

- A newly refurbished CCTV Hub which will house a fully IP system to improve the evidential quality of CCTV footage.
- A public space CCTV system that is fully compatible with the police Digital Evidence Management System (DEMS) enabling frontline officers to spend more time delivering investigative outcomes for victims of crime and having a community presence rather than attending control rooms to access footage.
- A maintenance contract that is overseen and managed by TVP reducing the administrative burden on local authorities and enabling service continuity.
- CCTV staff who are employed by TVP enabling a consistent approach to connections with local schemes such as PubWatch, direct access to police intelligence to support operational activity, and a focus on risk locations and people.
- Subject matter expertise from TVP's CCTV Operations Manager (in post since June 2022) to ensure that there is a comprehensive understanding of the system, that it continues to be fit for purpose, and is compliant with GDPR, DPA and other legal requirements, as well as being a single point of contact for legislative changes or national calls for evidence
- Improved integration of CCTV with wider TVP capabilities in the future such as Body Worn Video (BWV), Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) and drone technology to support evidential capture for investigations.
- Bi-annual reporting for local authority partners on the impact of CCTV and how investment into the Thames Valley CCTV Partnership contributes towards

Report of the Police and Crime Panel

detering crime, reducing the fear of crime, increasing crime detection and protecting vulnerable people.

- Increased opportunities for TVP to apply for Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) planning contributions to secure additional funding for CCTV to meet the future demand created by new developments
- Clear partnership agreements will be in place between TVP/OPCC and local authorities ensuring an ongoing commitment and longevity of service delivery. The SLA will clearly set out the agreed service that local authorities can expect to receive in return for their financial contribution to the partnership.

3. Delivering a Thames Valley CCTV Partnership

3.1 To deliver the PCC's vision for a Thames Valley CCTV Partnership, it is intended that the existing CCTV suites across the Thames Valley are consolidated into CCTV Hub(s).

Phase 1

3.2 Phase 1 involves establishing a CCTV Command Suite at Milton Keynes Police Station. This Command Suite will initially service Slough and Milton Keynes City local authority areas.

3.3 The supplier CDS has been awarded the contract to upgrade the CCTV systems for Slough and Milton Keynes City, with the system for Slough being integrated into the Milton Keynes Command Suite. The required fibre connection has also been commissioned.

3.4 Vetting for contractors is currently being finalised and Purchase Orders have been raised in order to start the work imminently.

3.5 Interviews have taken place for additional staff to be based at the Milton Keynes Command Suite with 5 individuals offered roles. This will bring the total number of staff to 8 CCTV operators and 1 supervisor enabling a full service provision.

3.5 The Slough CCTV Control Room will cease operation on 31 December 2023 with the Milton Keynes Command Suite ready to service both local authority areas from 1 January 2024.

3.6 In August 2023, both Milton Keynes City Council and Slough Borough Council were sent a consultation paper asking for feedback on the operating model to be delivered (24/7 operation or standard operating hours with an extended weekend operation) and the funding formula for the annual local authority revenue contributions to the partnership (based on their camera numbers or the formula used for calculating the PCC's Partnerships Fund – 50% population, 25% crime data and 25% non-crime data). The responses to this consultation are currently being reviewed.



Report of the Police and Crime Panel

Phase 2

3.7 Phase 2 involves the Oxfordshire local authorities, with the decision around whether the CCTV systems for these areas will be integrated into the Milton Keynes CCTV Command Suite, or if there will be a second Command Suite for Oxfordshire currently pending.

3.8 In August 2023, Oxfordshire local authorities were sent a consultation paper asking for feedback on the operating model to be delivered (based on one or two Command Suites for the Thames Valley, as well as a 24/7 operation or standard operating hours with an extended weekend operation) and the funding formula for the annual local authority revenue contributions (based on their camera numbers or the formula used for calculating the PCC's Partnerships Fund – 50% population, 25% crime data and 25% non-crime data).

3.9 The consultation responses from all local authorities will be incorporated into a paper which will go to the TVP CCTV Programme Board in December 2023. The proposals will then go through TVP CCMT, the PCC and local authorities before a decision is made.

3.10 Subject to any procurement timescales, it is estimated that works to integrate Oxfordshire CCTV Control Rooms into the Thames Valley CCTV Partnership will commence in the financial year 2024/2025

Phase 3

3.13 Phase 3 of developing the Thames Valley CCTV Partnership will involve engaging with Berkshire local authorities. With the exception of Reading and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, other local authority areas in Berkshire currently have fairly limited public space CCTV provision which we will seek to address.

3.14 In the meantime, work is ongoing to improve CCTV coverage for the communities in these areas using additional funding streams where possible (for example the Chief Constable and PCC's Community Fund and through the Home Office Safer Streets Fund).

Buckinghamshire

3.11 All Buckinghamshire CCTV is now run by Buckinghamshire Council from their control room in High Wycombe following a decision not to join the Thames Valley CCTV Partnership at this time.

3.12 The CCTV Suite in Aylesbury Police Station has subsequently been decommissioned. The four staff from this suite have either moved to the Milton Keynes Command Suite (or other roles in TVP) or have left TVP employment.



Report of the Police and Crime Panel

Next Steps

4.1 A paper will be taken to the next TVP CCTV Programme Board in December following the feedback from local authorities involved in phases 1 and 2 regarding the operating model for the Partnership and the funding formula to be used for annual revenue contributions from local authorities. The Programme Board will then make recommendations for the Chief Constable and PCC to review.

4.2 In 2024 a Thames Valley CCTV Partnership Board, chaired by the PCC, will be established to maintain strategic oversight and engagement with local authority partners at a Thames Valley-wide level.

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Report of the Police and Crime Panel

Report title: Annual Assurance Report 2022 from the Joint Independent Audit Committee to the PCC for Thames Valley and the Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police

Date: 3 November 2023

Author and contact: Martin Thornley, OPCC Chief Finance Office

Purpose of the report: As requested by the Panel

Recommendations: Information only

Executive Summary

This Annual Assurance Report 2022 explains how the Committee has complied with each of its specific responsibilities, referred to in Appendix 1 (page 15), during the last twelve months covering the period December 2021 to December 2022.

Scope of the Annual Assurance Report

The Committee's last annual report, presented to the PCC and Chief Constable at the Joint Independent Audit Committee (JIAC) meeting held on 17th December 2021, provided an assurance opinion that the risk management and internal control environment in Thames Valley Police (TVP) and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) was operating efficiently and effectively.

The report considered the following areas:

- Financial Management and Reporting
- Internal Control and Governance Environment
- Corporate Risk Management
- Business Continuity Management
- Internal Audit
- External Audit
- People Services
- Health & Safety
- Wellbeing & Environmental Protection
- Equality & Diversity
- Inspection and Review
- Accountability Arrangements
- Other issues (Professional & Ethical Standards - Force Oversight arrangements)



Report of the Police and Crime Panel

Findings

Based on the necessary information, JIAC can assure the PCC and Chief Constable that the risk management and internal control environment in Thames Valley is operating efficiently and effectively.

Constructive challenges over the past twelve months on a wide range of topics have given greater access to information and meetings; the positive relationship with the PCC and the Chief Constable and their senior staff has enabled JIAC to contribute to improved audit, risk management and internal controls.

Conclusion

JIAC hope that this report with the assurances it contains will enhance public trust and confidence in the governance of TVP and the OPCC.

The year ahead (2023) will be demanding due to:

- Inflation, with consequent impacts both on TVP finances, and on on the cost of living and energy costs for the TVP workforce;
- Challenges recruiting and retaining police staff;
- Onboarding new police officers recruited under the Police Uplift Programme;
- Reduced national public sector finances;
- Ongoing development of the Force's digital response; and
- Increased and changing demand profile.

JIAC will continue to seek answers on costs and business benefits. It will continue its scrutiny on Force change management, the delivery of Force financial performance and operational effectiveness. Given the significance of managing the people and culture risks for the success of TVP, it will continue to keep this area in focus in the year to come.

JIAC will remain alert to the extent to which TVP and the OPCC are exposed to risks, from whatever source that might weaken the control environment or otherwise adversely affect overall performance.



Report of the Police and Crime Panel

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Report of the Police and Crime Panel



JOINT INDEPENDENT AUDIT COMMITTEE



Annual Assurance Report 2022 from the Joint Independent Audit Committee to the PCC for Thames Valley and the Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police

Introduction

This Annual Assurance Report 2022 explains how the Committee has complied with each of its specific responsibilities, referred to in Appendix 1, during the last twelve months covering the period December 2021 to December 2022.

The Committee's last annual report, presented to the PCC and Chief Constable at the Joint Independent Audit Committee meeting held on 17th December 2021, provided an assurance opinion that the risk management and internal control environment in Thames Valley Police (TVP) and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) was operating efficiently and effectively.

For this year, meetings were able to be attended in person, where possible, but also held via MS Teams.

Financial Management and Reporting

We received and reviewed the separate Statement of Accounts for 2021/22 for the PCC & Group and the Chief Constable at our meeting in July, together with the external auditor's 'Audit Progress Report Year-ended 31 March 2022'.

At our October meeting, progress in concluding the audit plan for 2021/22 was still ongoing. There were queries still outstanding, as well as delays in receiving appropriate assurance from Grant Thornton regarding their audit of the Buckinghamshire Pension Fund accounts.

We recognise that this has been an extremely challenging financial closedown and audit period, due to Covid-19.

We will receive and discuss the Annual Audit Report at our meeting in December, which will include the Auditor's value for money (VFM) commentary.



Report of the Police and Crime Panel

In December 2021 we received a draft copy of the Annual Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2022/23 which we reviewed and scrutinised robustly, before it was formally approved by the PCC in January 2022. We considered and noted the Annual Treasury Management Report for 2021/22 in June. This report explained how officers had complied with the annual treasury strategy statement. We were reminded of the established governance arrangements, and that regular progress reports during the year were presented to the PCC and Chief Constable rather than the Committee.

Having considered all the information available to us we are satisfied that both the PCC's Chief Finance Officer and the Force Director of Finance have the necessary capability and capacity to ensure the proper administration of the PCC's and Force's financial affairs.

Indeed, the experience and skills of the two individuals concerned, and the teams they lead, have been of real benefit to the PCC and the Force and we commend their efforts and achievements.

Internal Control and Governance Environment

In March, we received an initial draft of the 2021/22 Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for consideration. Although no significant governance issues had been identified the covering report explained the key issues that had been considered by the Governance Advisory Group before reaching this conclusion. Overall, we were happy to endorse the accuracy of the AGS for inclusion in the annual Statement of Accounts.

We received an updated AGS for consideration and endorsement at our meeting in June. It was pleasing to note that following a review of the effectiveness of the present governance arrangements there were no significant governance issues that required immediate attention nor were there any potential issues that may have an adverse impact on the internal control environment during 2021/22.

In March, we received the updated Framework for Corporate Governance for 2022/23, which included the Statement of Corporate Governance, the Joint Code of Corporate Governance for the PCC and Chief Constable, and the Scheme of Corporate Governance, which included Financial and Contract Regulations. Only minor amendments were required this year to ensure that it remained relevant and fit for purpose.

In June we received an annual report from the Director of Information, as the Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO), which provided a summary across HC and TVP for the information assurance and information governance during 2021/22, to provide assurance that information risks were being managed effectively and highlighted some of the key



Report of the Police and Crime Panel

decisions that had been escalated to the SIRO during the year. This area remains complex and challenging for the Force; we note both progress and continued management attention, including rehearsals for potential incidents; but we remain alert that significant risks are yet to be fully addressed by programmes which will continue in 2023.

In March, we received an update report on the Information Commissioner's Officer (ICO) Hampshire Constabulary & Thames Valley Police Follow-Up Data Protection audit. The ICO is an independent regulator for data protection legislation and they are empowered by law to carry out compliance audits. The report detailed that good progress had been made, with 49 of the accepted 55 recommendations being completed.

In October, we received a verbal update on the governance arrangements for TVP collaborations, with no significant changes noted. Given that these arrangements are fairly fixed, reporting should be 'by exception' in future years.

In October, we received a verbal update on the Force's Portfolio, Programme & Project Management arrangements relating to the Force's 2025 Strategy.

As and when appropriate during the year we attended meetings of the Force Transformation Board to see, for ourselves, the action being taken to ensure that key projects and programmes are being managed effectively. We remain an observer on the joint Hampshire/TVP Collaboration Governance Board.

In October, we received an Update on Next Steps Programme (Equip). The update detailed the individual projects to upgrade the Force's system to ensure they meet the current needs of the business in the short term. We look forward to receiving further updates on the Next Steps Programme and how the post Equip Programme risks are being mitigated.

Based on the information provided to the Committee during the last twelve months we can provide assurance that, to the best of our knowledge, the corporate governance framework within Thames Valley is operating efficiently and effectively.

Corporate Risk Management

We have reviewed regular quarterly updates from both the Force and the Office of the PCC (OPCC) in terms of their strategic risk management systems and processes. This is an area of business we take very seriously, and question and challenge officers on a regular basis to ensure that we are sighted on all significant corporate risks and are satisfied that these risks are being dealt with in a timely, effective and appropriate manner.



Report of the Police and Crime Panel

Based on the information provided to the Committee during the last twelve months it appears that the organisational risks in both the OPCC and Force are being managed effectively and that there is appropriate capability for their respective published goals and objectives to be achieved efficiently and effectively.

We noted with concern that the programme to replace the Force's radio systems is still a top-priority risk, for which responsibility lies outside the Force. We probed TVP's management actions around this risk, and examined a "near miss" incident; we were assured that TVP is doing everything it can. Nevertheless this remains a high-potential-harm risk and we hope that in 2023 the Home Office and other parties will make a breakthrough.

Business Continuity Management

We have received regular quarterly updates from the Force on business continuity, including incidents and exercises.

We are content that business continuity is treated as a serious issue by senior officers within the Force and that previous learning has been used to good effect.

We are satisfied that the business continuity management processes are operating efficiently and effectively in identifying issues and capturing organisational learning and there are no significant issues that we need to draw to your attention. We note that the increased prevalence of ransomware can place new pressures on systems recovery and business continuity. The Force has provided assurance that these areas are adequately controlled, with further work scheduled for 2023.

Internal Audit

In June we received the annual report from the Chief Internal Auditor. We were pleased to note that the 2021/22 Joint Internal Audit Plan had been completed in full. Of the 23 completed audits, no had received substantial assurance, but 17 (74%) had received reasonable assurance, and 6 (26%) had received limited assurance. No audit received minimal assurance. It was pleasing to note the results of the additional sources of assurance that had been provided by independent internal functions or external bodies. Of the 10 sources identified 5 (50%) were deemed to provide substantial assurance, 4 (40%) were deemed to provided reasonable assurance and one (10%) were deemed to provide limited assurance. No source of external assurance were deemed to provide minimal assurance. We are pleased that the audit programme continues to return a range of assurance levels, this is a reflection of both the independence of the process and its effectiveness in targeting a cross section of matters within the Force and OPCC.



Report of the Police and Crime Panel

We received and endorsed the Internal Audit Strategy and Annual Plan 2022/23 at our meeting in March. We noted that that the annual plan included all relevant financial systems, as well as other business critical functional areas and activities. We were pleased to note the wide range of audit activity, looking at high-risk functions and operations across both organisations.

Although the resourced audit plan does not include a specific allocation of days for use by the Committee, there is an extant agreement with the CC and PCC that the Committee may, at its discretion, draw on up to 10 audit days for its own specific use. We did not need to use this facility during 2022.

We challenged robustly, with internal auditors and appropriate officers, the reasons for the reported shortcomings in the assurance levels for some reports and the completion of the associated action plans. Based on the reviews completed during the year, the opinion on the organisation's system of internal control was that key controls in place are adequate and effective, such that an assessment of reasonable assurance could be placed on the operation of the organisation's functions. The opinion demonstrates a good awareness and application of effective internal controls necessary to facilitate the achievement of objectives and outcomes. There was, in general, an effective system of risk management, control and governance to address the risk that objectives are not fully achieved.

In March and October, we received updates from the Chief Internal Auditor on progress with delivery of the annual internal audit plan, including a summary of key issues arising from recently completed audits. We continue to receive final audit reports which give us early sight of any key issues arising from completed audits that require management action. This is particularly useful for those few audits where limited or minimal assurance is given. We have also received details of the team's external Public Sector Internal Audit Standards assessment which took place in May. It was pleasing to note that the team fully conform to all the standards.

We have received and debated regular update reports each quarter on progress of agreed actions in internal audit reports. We are pleased that the number of outstanding audit actions is on a downward trend. We hope that management continues to take the implementation of actions arising from internal audit reports very seriously and we shall continue to monitor this situation rigorously in coming years.

We continue to have confidential access to the Chief Internal Auditor and his team to discuss both specific actions and the context of the Audit programme in TVP/PCC and gain good assurance from these conversations.



Report of the Police and Crime Panel

We are satisfied that the system of internal audit in Thames Valley is operating efficiently and effectively and there are no specific issues or areas of concern that we would wish to highlight to the PCC and/or Chief Constable.

External Audit

In March the external auditor, EY, presented its outline audit plan for the PCC and Chief Constable for the financial year ending 31st March 2022. This explained the context for the audit, as well as outlining the auditor's process and strategy. In terms of VFM risks, the main focus would be: financial sustainability; governance; and improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The scale fee for 2021/22 was planned to increase to £78,552, but was yet to be determined by the Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA).

In June we received EY's 'Annual Planning Report for the Year-ended 31 March 2022' which detailed how they would carry out their responsibilities as the external auditors. Following receipt of the draft accounts, initially their audit work was progressing well. At the October meeting, they were still working on their final queries. They hoped to complete their work by the end of November, but they did state that this would be subject to the timely receipt of information from Grant Thornton in respect of the Local Government Pension Fund as administered by Buckinghamshire Council.

The committee has been disappointed by progress on the accounts this year, and is glad that we will be receiving a lessons-learned report at our December meeting, to ensure that neither TVP/the OPCC nor the external auditor contribute to such delays in future.

People Services

In June, we received a full overview report on performance by the People Directorate. The report provided an introduction and context, details relating to governance and accountability, the Directorate's strategic ambitions and priorities, context and summary of performance for 2021/22, key areas of priority for 2022/23 and future risks and mitigation.

The Committee challenged robustly the detail to gain assurances on the Force's arrangements. We will maintain a close interest in this key area of risk for the Force. This year JIAC has noted the issues experienced by the Metropolitan Police and some other forces, and the risks these sorts of issues could pose to the Force's public 'licence to operate'. In particular we asked to what extent cultural issues reported in the Met (racism, poor treatment of women, loss of trust around stop and search, etc) might be paralleled in TVP. We were pleased both to hear strong positive assurance around TVP's culture, and to see evidence of an active programme of risk mitigation including a number of creative and forward-looking actions by TVP's leadership. We also noted,



Report of the Police and Crime Panel

through our programme of visiting other parts of TVP's governance, that these issues are being actively observed and challenged through PESP and other governance mechanisms. Nevertheless these issues will remain vital for the success of the Force and we will continue a watching brief on these reputational risks in 2023.

Health & Safety

In June we received a summary report on the principal activities and outcomes relating to the promotion and management of Health & Safety (H&S) Management in TVP during 2021/22. The report built on the improvements from the previous year, providing an overview of the Force's governance and accountability for health and safety, strategic ambitions and priorities, performance for 2021/22, revised operating model, priority areas for 2021/22, and future risks and mitigations for 2022/23.

In October we received an update to TVP's Health & Safety Annual Report setting out the Force's position on 'Competence', their assessment on outstanding generic risk assessments and line of sight to the Chief Constable.

Wellbeing & Environmental Protection

In June we received an annual report on organisational 'wellbeing' during 2021/22. The report was comprehensive and built on the report received the previous year. The report focussed on the five key strands of wellbeing i.e. physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, financial wellbeing, health safety and environmental wellbeing, and leadership. The report also provided updates on the existing governance framework, reassurance and confidence, performance and management of key issues and risks, identification of key areas of priority for 2022/23, future risks and mitigation for 2022/23 and the Wellbeing Dashboard and Communications Plan. The dashboard is presented to CCMT each month, which is then disseminated to LPA Commanders and Heads of Departments so that their leadership teams are fully sighted on what is going on and how they can contribute to the wellbeing of their officers and staff

In respect of environmental issues, we received the Environmental & Sustainability Annual Report in October. The report provided details on the Force's opportunities, risks and drivers, as well as the seven key objectives: staff engagement, reduce waste and increase recycling, buildings, travel and transport, procurement, water and biodiversity. Targets were listed and we were keen to ensure the Force's senior leadership ownership of the objectives.

The report also referred to the Force's ten year Environmental Sustainability strategy, which we were glad to receive.



Report of the Police and Crime Panel

Equality & Diversity

In June we received the 2021/22 annual report on equality, diversity and inclusion which showcased the achievements from the past 12 months, future risks and mitigations and planned activities for 2022/23. The report covered the following areas: strategic governance, attraction recruitment and representation, gender pay gap, disability, leadership and personal development, and providing a service to diverse communities. We were also provided with an update on the work of the Positive Engagement Team.

We recognise the ambition of Force leadership on this important issue, and look forward to them building on the achievements to date and delivery of the key areas of priority.

Inspection and Review

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) independently assesses police forces and policing across activity from neighbourhood teams to serious crime and the fight against crime – in the public interest. HMICFRS decides on the depth, frequency and areas to inspect based on their judgements about what is in the public interest.

We understand that the Chief Constable and his management team considers each report in detail, irrespective of whether it relates directly to Thames Valley Police and, where appropriate, agrees an appropriate action plan. We also understand that the PCC is required to consider and publish a response to each HMICFRS report relevant to Thames Valley Police.

The Committee continue to receive copies of HMICFRS reports and PCC responses in a timely manner. The Committee received responses to the following:

- A Joint Thematic Inspection of the Police & Crown Prosecution Service's Response to the Rape Phase 2: Post Charge.
- Thames Valley Peel Inspection 2021/22.

In terms of the 2021/22 Peel Inspection, the Force was graded as:

- 'Good' in the areas of recording data about crime; treatment of the public; and managing offenders
- 'Adequate' in the areas of preventing crime; investigating crime; protecting vulnerable people; and developing a positive workplace.
- 'Requires Improvement' in the areas of responding to the public; and good use of resources.



Report of the Police and Crime Panel

Notwithstanding the above, as far as we know, HMICFRS has not issued any report during the last twelve months that has specifically referred to assurance on the internal Thames Valley Police control environment and/or highlighted governance issues for the PCC and Chief Constable to consider.

Accountability Arrangements

Our operating principles require us to:

- On a timely basis report to the PCC and the Chief Constable with its advice and recommendations in relation to any matters that it considers relevant to governance, risk management and financial management.
- Report to the PCC and the Chief Constable on its findings, conclusions and recommendations concerning the adequacy and effectiveness of their governance, risk management and internal control frameworks; financial reporting arrangements and internal and external audit functions.
- On an annual basis to review its performance against its operating principles and report the results of this review to the PCC and the Chief Constable.

We are grateful to the PCC and the Chief Constable for affording us regular discussions as well as for the attendance of the PCC and the Deputy Chief Constable at meetings of the JIAC, enabling a continuous dialogue through the year on matters of interest, which have been described in the main body of this report.

Other Issues

Professional & Ethical Standards - Force Oversight arrangements

We continue to attend, as observers, meetings of the Professional & Ethical Standards Panel (PESP) that assesses whether the Chief Constable's arrangements for, and the PCC's oversight of, the proper handling of complaints made against the Force, and consideration of other integrity, ethics and professional standards issues, are operating effectively in practice. We believe that their current Terms of Reference provide the basis for the Panel to provide effective support to the PCC and Chief Constable. We welcome the contribution the new members of PESP make to the panel.

General

We are pleased to report that the arrangements agreed eight years ago, as set out below, are working effectively:



Report of the Police and Crime Panel

- Be regularly briefed by the Chief Constable and PCC on the full range of activities falling within our specific responsibilities and attend other relevant internal meetings.
- Have direct access to the oversight of professional standards and ethics matters by regularly attending the Professional and Ethical Standards Panel (previously known as the Complaints, Integrity and Ethics Panel) as an observer.
- Attend any training and conference events that will ensure members are up to date with the policing landscape and audit requirements.
- Attend as an observer the regular Force Performance meetings.
- Attend as an observer the Hampshire and Thames Valley Policing Collaboration Governance Board.
- Attend as an observer the Force Transformation Board.

One member attended the CIPFA conference for Police Audit Committee members discussing challenges faced by audit committees and proposed legislative changes that will impact on the work of audit committees.

Over the year we had meetings with the Chief Constable, PCC and senior staff for relevant organisational and functional updates between formal JIAC meetings.

These briefings and invitations to attend internal Force meetings, coupled with the sharing of appropriate CCMT reports of interest, continue to raise our awareness and knowledge of legislative, policy or operational initiatives that are relevant to the Committee's remit, such as organisational structural changes, service delivery initiatives, and financial and service planning issues. In turn, this is improving our collective understanding of how the Force and OPCC governance arrangements and control environments are operating in practice.

JIAC Operating Principles

The Committee's current operating principles are shown in Appendix 1.

One committee member, Amna Rehman, stepped down for personal reasons during the year. We are in discussion with the OPCC to recruit a skilled replacement.

Conclusions

The purpose of the Joint Independent Audit Committee is to provide independent assurance to the PCC and Chief Constable regarding the adequacy of the risk management framework and the associated control environment within Thames Valley Police and the Office of the PCC.

Constructive challenges over the past twelve months on a wide range of topics have given us greater access to information and meetings; the positive relationship with the



Report of the Police and Crime Panel

PCC and the Chief Constable and their senior staff has enabled us to contribute to improved audit, risk management and internal controls.

The year ahead (2023) will be demanding due to:

- Inflation, with consequent impacts both on TVP finances, and on the cost of living and energy costs for the TVP workforce;
- Challenges recruiting and retaining police staff;
- Onboarding new police officers recruited under the Police Uplift Programme;
- Reduced national public sector finances;
- Ongoing development of the Force's digital response; and
- Increased and changing demand profile.

No doubt we will continue to seek answers on costs and business benefits. We will continue our scrutiny on Force change management, the delivery of Force financial performance and operational effectiveness. Given the significance of managing the people and culture risks for the success of TVP, we will continue to keep this area in focus in the year to come.

We will remain alert to the extent to which TVP and the OPCC are exposed to risks, from whatever source that might weaken the control environment or otherwise adversely affect overall performance.

Based on the information that we have seen collectively or know about individually we can assure the PCC and Chief Constable that the risk management and internal control environment in Thames Valley is operating efficiently and effectively.

We hope that this report with the assurances it contains will enhance public trust and confidence in the governance of TVP and the OPCC.

Joint Independent Audit Committee

Members:

Mr Michael Day
Dr Stephen Page
Mrs Melissa Strange
Dr Gordon Woods

16 December 2022



Report of the Police and Crime Panel

Appendix 1

Joint Independent Audit Committee - Operating Principles

Statement of Purpose

- Our Joint Independent Audit Committee is a key component of the PCC and Chief Constable's arrangements for corporate governance. It provides an independent and high-level focus on the audit, assurance and reporting arrangements that underpin good governance and financial standards.
- The purpose of the Committee is to provide independent assurance to the PCC and the Chief Constable regarding the adequacy of the risk management framework and the associated control environment within Thames Valley Police and the Office of the PCC. It will consider the internal and external audit reports of both the PCC and Chief Constable and advise both parties according to good governance principles. It has oversight of general governance matters and provides comment on any new or amended PCC policies and strategies with regard to financial risk and probity.
- These operating principles will summarise the core functions of the Committee in relation to the Office of the PCC and the Force and describe the protocols in place to enable it to operate independently, robustly and effectively.

The Committee will report directly to the PCC and the Chief Constable.

Committee Composition and Structure

The Committee will consist of five members who are independent of the PCC and Thames Valley Police. They will be appointed by the Chief Constable and the PCC (or their representatives).

The Chairman will be elected by the Committee on an annual basis.

The Committee will hold four formal meetings a year – in public - although there may be a requirement to hold additional meetings at short notice.

The PCC and Chief Constable will attend or be appropriately represented at formal meetings. Committee meetings will be held at key strategic times of the year to coincide with the budget process and publication of financial management reports and accounts:



Report of the Police and Crime Panel

1. **March** – to consider the Internal Auditor’s Internal Audit Plan and the External Audit Plan
2. **July** – to consider the End of Year Reports, the Annual Governance Statement, Annual Statement of Accounts and to receive the Audit Results report
3. **September** – to consider mid-year progress reports;
4. **December** – to receive the Annual External Audit Letter and agree the Annual Assurance Report of the Committee.

The agenda, reports and minutes of all Committee meetings will be published on the PCC and Force websites. However, members of the press and public shall be excluded from a meeting whenever it is likely that confidential information will be disclosed. Confidential information is defined as:

- a) Information furnished to the Committee by a Government department upon terms (however expressed) which forbid the disclosure of the information to the public; and
- b) Information the disclosure of which to the public is prohibited by or under any enactment or by the order of a Court.

Methods of Working

The Committee will:

- Advise the PCC and Chief Constable on good governance principles
- Adopt appropriate risk management arrangements
- Provide robust and constructive challenge
- Take account of relevant corporate social responsibility factors when challenging and advising the PCC and Chief Constable (such as value for money, diversity, equality and health and safety)
- Be regularly briefed by the Chief Constable and PCC on the full range of activities falling within its specific responsibilities and attend other relevant internal meetings
- Have direct access to the oversight of professional standards and ethics matters by regularly attending the Complaints, Integrity and Ethics Panel as an observer
- Attend any training and conference events that will ensure members are kept up to date with the policing landscape and audit requirements
- Provide an annual assurance report to the PCC and Chief Constable

Specific responsibilities

The Committee has the following specific responsibilities:

Financial Management and Reporting

Report of the Police and Crime Panel

- Provide assurance to the PCC and Chief Constable regarding the adequacy of the arrangements, capacity and capability available to their respective chief finance officers to ensure the proper administration of the Commissioner's and Force's financial affairs.
- Review the Annual Statement of Accounts. Specifically, to consider whether appropriate accounting policies have been followed and whether there are concerns arising from the financial statements or from the audit of the financial statements that need to be brought to the attention of the PCC and/or the Chief Constable.
- Consider the external auditor's report to those charged with governance on issues arising from the audit of the financial statements, and to give advice and make such recommendations on the adequacy of the level of assurance and on improvement as it considers appropriate.

Internal Control and Governance Environment

- Consider and endorse the local Code of Corporate Governance
- Consider and endorse the Annual Governance Statement (AGS)
- Monitor implementation and delivery of the AGS Action Plan
- Consider the arrangements to secure value for money and review assurances and assessments on the effectiveness of these arrangements
- Consider and comment upon the adequacy and effectiveness of the assurance framework, and the specific governance and accountability policies, systems and controls in place, such as the Corporate Governance Framework; anti-fraud and corruption; whistle-blowing, declarations of interest and gifts and hospitality.
- Review arrangements for the assessment of fraud risks and potential harm from fraud and corruption and monitor the effectiveness of the counter fraud strategy, actions and resources
- To consider the governance and assurance arrangements for significant partnerships or collaborations

Corporate Risk Management

- Consider and comment upon the strategic risk management processes; and
- Receive and consider assurances that organisational risks are being managed effectively and that published goals and objectives will be achieved efficiently and economically, making recommendations as necessary

Business Continuity Management

- Consider and comment upon business continuity management processes, and
- Receive and consider assurances that business continuity is being managed effectively and that published goals and objectives will be achieved efficiently and economically, making recommendations as necessary



Report of the Police and Crime Panel

Internal Audit

- Annually review the internal audit charter and resource
- Receive and consider the adequacy and effectiveness of the arrangements for the provision of the internal audit service
- Consider and comment on the Internal Audit Strategy and Plan
- Receive and review internal audit reports and monitor progress of implementing agreed actions
- To consider the Head of Internal Audit's statement on the level of conformance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) and Local Government Application Note (LGAN) and the results of the Quality Assurance & Improvement Programme (QAIP) that support the statement
- Consider and comment upon the annual report of the Head of Internal Audit
- Obtain assurance that an annual review of the effectiveness of the internal audit function takes place

External Audit

- Receive and review reports from the external auditors, including the annual audit letter and audit opinion
- Review the effectiveness of external audit
- Consider and comment upon any proposals affecting the provision of the external audit service
- Consider the level of fees charged, and
- At present TVP participates in the national procurement of external audit services through the Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA). However, should the PCC and Chief Constable decide that local procurement would be better the Committee would undertake the role of the Independent Audit Panel, as set out in the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, including considering and recommending appropriate arrangements for any future appointment of External Auditors

Health & Safety

- Satisfy itself on behalf of the PCC and the Chief Constable that an adequate and effective policy and practice framework is in place to discharge legal duties in relation to health and safety. In particular, having regard to the safety, health and welfare of police officers and police staff, people in the care and custody of Thames Valley Police and all members of the public on police premises or property



Report of the Police and Crime Panel

Equality and Diversity

- Satisfy itself on behalf of the PCC and Chief Constable that an adequate policy and practice framework is in place to discharge statutory requirements in relation to equalities and diversity

Inspection and Review

- To consider any HMIC report that provides assurance on the internal control environment and/or highlights governance issues for the PCC and/or Chief Constable

Accountability Arrangements

- On a timely basis report to the PCC and the Chief Constable with its advice and recommendations in relation to any matters that it considers relevant to governance, risk management and financial management.
- Report to the PCC and the Chief Constable on its findings, conclusions and recommendations concerning the adequacy and effectiveness of their governance, risk management and internal control frameworks; financial reporting arrangements and internal and external audit functions.
- On an annual basis to review its performance against its operating principles and report the results of this review to the PCC and the Chief Constable.

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Report to the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel

Title: Topical Issues

Date: 3 November 2023

Author: Khalid Ahmed, Scrutiny
Officer, Thames Valley Police
& Crime Panel



BACKGROUND

The Panel is provided with policing and crime news which the Scrutiny Officer of the Panel has horizon scanned to provide Panel Members with up-to-date information on topical issues.

Members of the Panel can ask questions of the Police and Crime Commissioner based on the information contained in these media articles.

Thames Valley Police jobs going begging as force faces recruitment struggles

<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/uknews/thames-valley-police-jobs-going-begging-as-force-faces-recruitment-struggles/ar-AA1h3uNd>

The cost of living crisis, job market saturation and the 'bad press' surrounding policing have all been blamed as factors behind recent struggles to recruit new officers at Thames Valley Police. The country's largest non-metropolitan force had one of the highest officer turnovers in England and Wales, according to a new report.

Officer recruitment is down 10 per cent from last year, according to an assessment from the Chief Constable's Management Team (CCMT), which was presented at the TVP and Crime Panel on September 15. Potential recruits have been attracted to other forces, particularly those which also now offer the Initial Police Learning and Development Programme, an entry route combining classroom and 'on the job' learning.

Thames Valley Police also lost 35 officers per month in 2022, 25 of which were resignations or transfers out, which the force labelled an 'avoidable' attrition/turnover rate. Other reasons the force cited for its sluggish intake of new officers include, job market saturation, the cost of living crisis and 'associated bad press around policing generally'.

TVP Chief Constable Jason Hogg highlighted some of the difficulties facing new recruits as he addressed 12 new police constables who started on Monday, September 18, after training at

Police Now's national academy. He said: "You are joining policing at a particularly challenging time, when public trust and confidence is lower than it has been for many years.

"Remember that every interaction you have with the public, however small, is a chance to change that." The number of candidates failing at vetting has also risen, meaning TVP's training courses are only running at 83 per cent capacity, compared to 90-10 per cent last year.

The assessment says this is due to police standards being revised after high-profile cases of police misconduct in London's Metropolitan Police. It reads: "CCMT are well sighted on the issues TVP are facing round retention of officers and staff within TVP.

"The recruitment labour market remains challenging and we are struggling to attract sufficient numbers and to retain these people, their skills and experience within the organisation. A lot of hard work has taken place over the last two to three years to achieve the Police Uplift Programme, the toll on the enabling departments should not be underestimated."

The Police Uplift Programme (PUP) was the Government's scheme to recruit an 'additional' 20,000 police officers in England and Wales between September 2019 and May 2023. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Home Secretary Suella Braverman hailed the programme a success after more than 20,000 officers were recruited between April 2020 and March 2023.

However, analysis suggests that policing cuts under the Conservatives in 2010 should also be taken into account. Under the PUP, TVP's total number of officers swelled to 5,000 – the largest in its history – as an additional 785 officers joined the force, exceeding the target of 609 officers.

TVP said PUP data also showed that it was 41st out of 43 forces for resignations alone and 38th out of 43 for overall police constable turnover including retirements/dismissals. The assessment adds: "The qualitative impact of this is a decrease in experienced officers within TVP to help us achieve our strategic aims and indicates that we are potentially not an employer of choice."

The starting salary for police officers joining TVP is £31,551, which rises to in excess of £49,044 after seven years of service. The force covers an area of over 2,200 square miles across Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Oxfordshire, serving 2.34 million people.

Crime in England and Wales has fallen to its lowest level on record, data from the Office for National Statistics shows.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-67161967.amp>

Incidents of violent crime have dropped by 28% in the year to June 2023. The decline has been driven by a fall in criminal damage and fraud offences recorded by the police, ONS said.

A separate Crime Survey for England and Wales, which polls members of the public, suggests theft has dropped by 20% below pre-pandemic levels.

According to ONS, the number of recorded homicides fell to 602, a drop of 10% when compared to the 667 recorded the previous year. However, shoplifting offences recorded by the police have risen by 25%.

The British Retail Consortium (BRC) told the BBC that the levels of theft now cost retailers almost £1bn a year, while Dame Sharon White, the boss of John Lewis, said shoplifting had become an "epidemic" in the past year.

The Crime Survey, which interviews members of the public about their experiences, and is regarded as the best indicator of crime trends, suggests incidents of anti-social behaviour (ASB) are down 15% on pre-pandemic levels.

However, perceptions of ASB are at roughly the same level, with around a quarter of people saying it was problem in their area.

Police-recorded incidents of burglary were down 29% on the number recorded in the year to March 2020.

Other key findings from the ONS showed:

- Offences involving weapons had slightly risen compared to the previous year.
- Crimes involving firearms, excluding those recorded in Devon and Cornwall, rose by 13%, to a similar level seen before the pandemic.
- The biggest rise in offences was for imitation firearms, which went up 26% to 2,566 from 2,031 offences.
- In the year to June 2023, 2.10 million offences were recorded in total in the year to June, compared with 2.12 million in the previous 12 months.
- Knife possession offences jumped across England and Wales, rising to 28,211 in the year to June, while crime associated with knives recorded by police rose 3% in the last year. This remains 7% below the pre-pandemic level.

The ONS data showed the Met Police, West Midlands Police and Greater Manchester force recorded the highest levels of knife crime in the UK.

Modern slavery helpline calls surge from care staff

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-67151672>

A national helpline for victims of modern slavery is reporting a steep rise in calls from overseas workers who came to the UK to help plug staffing gaps in the care sector.

Many said they had paid huge sums to the people who brought them over after visa rules changed last year. Unseen UK said more than 700 care staff used its helpline in 2022.

In 2021 its helpline was contacted about 15 cases of modern slavery in the care sector, involving 63 potential victims. By 2022 there were 106 cases, involving 708 potential victims. In 2023 the figures have continued to rise.

Nearly one in five potential modern-slavery victims identified by the charity in 2022 worked in the care sector.

The report, published says some workers are being charged thousands of pounds for travel to the UK and sponsorship certificates. The cost of sponsorship is a few hundred pounds, which is met by most care companies - but the charity says a few unscrupulous employers and agents are charging workers as much as £25,000, adding interest and deducting the debt from their wages.

"It becomes evident that workers are in a cycle where they will never be able to pay off the debt," says the report.

In February 2022, the government made care work a "shortage" occupation, allowing more people to be recruited from abroad to work in care homes or home care, aiming to tackle a record 164,000 social-care vacancies in England in 2021/22.

Vacancies have since fallen slightly, largely as a result of nearly 70,000 people arriving in the UK to work in care, according to Skills for Care.

Care providers have told BBC News some overseas staff are emailing them or arriving at their offices asking if they can take them on because the company that brought them to the UK is either giving them no work or not enough for them to survive.

The government says overseas care workers in the UK should be paid at least the required minimum salary and has published a recruitment code of practice.

Thames Valley Police make 98 arrests during week of drug busts targeting county lines

<https://www.miltonkeynes.co.uk/news/crime/thames-valley-police-make-98-arrests-during-week-of-drug-busts-targeting-county-lines-4379257>

Thames Valley Police has released the results from its week of action disrupting county line drug dealing.

Between 9 to 15 October, police officers arrested 98 people, they searched homes in Oxfordshire, Berkshire, and Buckinghamshire.

During County Lines Intensification Week, officers visited homes where they suspected vulnerable people were being exploited for crime operations.

Thames Valley Police obtained warrants to raid homes all across the policing area to break up Organised Crime Group (OCG) strongholds.

County lines refer to drug dealing where gangs use phones to arrange the movement of contraband from big cities into rural areas.

Police intelligence suggests that OCGs often use children and vulnerable people who may have addiction or mental health issues, to distribute their drugs.

Thames Valley Police says this often involves vulnerable victims being groomed, coerced, and intimidated.

Out of the 90 arrests, 40 people were charged. Thames Valley Police identified 30 people involved in drug crime that needed safeguarding, and believes it has identified 40 homes that were being run by OCGs.

Also police officers took £67,000 and 121 mobile phones that they believe were linked to criminal activity. Thames Valley Police says new information obtained during the raids will help its continued operations.

The police force has also provided residents with signs and symptoms which could help identify a young person:

- Travelling alone, particularly in school hours, late at night or frequently
- Looking lost or in unfamiliar surroundings
- Anxious, frightened, angry or displaying other behaviours that make you worried about them
- In possession of more than one phone
- Carrying lots of cash

Rise in vehicle thefts says Thames Valley Police figures

<https://www.heraldseries.co.uk/news/23872299.rise-vehicle-thefts-says-thames-valley-police-figures/>

More people had a car stolen in the Thames Valley area this year than a year ago, new figures show. A motoring group has called the rise in vehicle crimes "worrying for everyone".

New figures from the Home Office show Thames Valley Police recorded 4,018 crimes of 'theft or unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle' in the year to June, up 23 per cent from 3,255 thefts the year before. This was also a rise from the same period five years ago when 2,799 such crimes were registered in the area.

The AA said the jump in car thefts is a cause for concern. Gus Park, managing director for AA insurance services, said: "These figures are in danger of getting out of control, which if left to spiral further will have big cost implications in terms of the impact to wider society, let alone the price policyholders pay.

"We urge police chiefs and crime commissioners across the country to create an action plan to crack the case."

Mr Park further suggested drivers should avoid "giving miscreants an easy win", advising them to use steering wheel locks and parking in a garage when possible.

Across England and Wales, there were 132,000 vehicle thefts in the year to June, up 13 per cent from 116,000 the year before.

The charge rate remains low for car thefts with 2 per cent of crimes in Thames Valley resulting in a charge in the past year.

Meanwhile, 75 per cent of cases were closed without the force identifying a suspect.

Superintendent Matthew Moscrop, part of the National Police Chiefs' Council team on vehicle theft, said police chiefs are working to clamp down on the sale of technology used to break into vehicles and to close routes for selling them once they are stolen.

He said: "Intelligence suggests a large proportion of vehicle theft can be attributed to organised crime groups and there have been a number of successful operations around the country which have led to the discovery of not only stolen vehicles but also ammunition and drugs."

"Tackling vehicle crime needs approaching from several different angles, and we can only achieve this through working closely with our partners in both Government and industry," he added.

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The decline has been driven by a fall in criminal damage and fraud offences recorded by the police, ONS said.

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The Crime Survey, which interviews members of the public about their experiences, and is regarded as the best indicator of crime trends, suggests incidents of anti-social behaviour (ASB) are down 15% on pre-pandemic levels.

However perceptions of ASB are at roughly the same level, with around a quarter of people saying it was problem in their area.

Police-recorded incidents of burglary were down 29% on the number recorded in the year to March 2020.

In August, Home Secretary Suella Braverman said police must investigate every theft and pursue "every reasonable line of inquiry", after data showed just 4.4% of all theft offences resulted in someone being charged.

Other key findings from the ONS showed:

Offences involving weapons had slightly risen compared to the previous year.

Crimes involving firearms, excluding those recorded in Devon and Cornwall, rose by 13%, to a similar level seen before the pandemic.

The biggest rise in offences was for imitation firearms, which went up 26% to 2,566 from 2,031 offences.

In the year to June 2023, 2.10 million offences were recorded in total in the year to June, compared with 2.12 million in the previous 12 months.

Knife possession offences jumped across England and Wales, rising to 28,211 in the year to June, while crime associated with knives recorded by police rose 3% in the last year. This remains 7% below the pre-pandemic level.

The ONS data showed the Met Police, West Midlands Police and Greater Manchester force recorded the highest levels of knife crime in the UK.

"This could suggest that improvements to recording practices are beginning to have less impact on trends in these offences," the ONS said.

Billy Gazard of the ONS said: "Our latest data shows crime continues to fall and is down 10% compared with 12 months ago.

"This decline in crimes against people and households has been driven by falls in criminal damage and fraud offences.

"While falls in criminal damage and fraud reported to Action Fraud (the public-facing reporting body) were also reflected in police-recorded crime, police figures also showed increases in crimes against businesses, such as shoplifti

Rise In Shoplifting Crimes Recorded in Thames Valley

<https://www.bracknellnews.co.uk/news/23869910.shoplifting-crimes-recorded-thames-valley/>

There was a rise in the number of shoplifting crimes recorded in Thames Valley last year, new figures show. It comes as the Association of Convenience Stores said the new data only represents "a fraction" of the "unprecedented" level of theft retailers are facing.

Office for National Statistics figures show about 12,200 shoplifting offences were recorded by Thames Valley Police in the year to June – up from 10,000 in 2022.

It follows trends across England and Wales where reports of shoplifting increased 25%, from 293,000 offences in 2021-22 to 365,200 last year.

However, it was below the 368,700 shoplifting crimes recorded in 2019, before the pandemic.

James Lowman, Association of Convenience Stores chief executive, said: "Convenience retailers are facing unprecedented levels of theft against their businesses at the hands of prolific offenders who are targeting stores repeatedly without fear of reproach."

He added: "These incidents take a huge toll on retailers and their colleagues, so it's crucial that every incident reported to the police gets investigated."

He said the ONS figures show a rise in reported shoplifting to police, but only represent "a fraction" of what is happening.

"The vast majority of theft still goes unreported, as retailers are frustrated at the lack of response and follow up activity from their local police forces," he added.

Overall theft offences have increased 10% from the previous year, with 1.7 million crimes recorded in the year to June.

The ONS said this rise was predominantly the result of increases in theft offences against businesses, such as shoplifting.

In Thames Valley, police recorded about 60,300 theft offences in 2022-23. It was a rise from 52,600 the year before.

Paddy Lillis, Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers general secretary, added: "Shoplifting is not a victimless crime, theft from shops has long been a major flashpoint for violence and abuse against shopworkers."

He said: "Having to deal with repeated and persistent shoplifters can cause issues beyond the theft itself like anxiety, fear and in some cases physical harm to retail workers."

The overall number of crimes recorded by police in England and Wales in the year to June 2023 stood at 6.7 million, compared with 6.5 million in the previous 12 months.

The latest increase across has mainly been driven by the increase in shoplifting, together with a jump in fraud offences against businesses – more of which is being reported due to action by industry bodies, the ONS added.

Thames Valley Police recorded 183,700 total crimes in the year to June – up from 177,100 in 2021-22.

Year-long waits for justice in fraud cases in Thames Valley

<https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/23832173.year-long-waits-justice-fraud-cases-thames-valley/>

Potential victims of serious fraud are waiting more than a year for cases to be concluded in Thames Valley, figures show.

The Law Society has said the complexity of fraud cases combined with backlogs across the legal system could be behind the long waits. Figures from the Ministry of Justice show the median wait for 70 outstanding fraud cases in Thames Valley was 61 weeks.

Across England, the median waiting time for outstanding cases is 44 weeks – the longest of any major crime category.

In addition, 312 cases have been outstanding for two years or more – including 24 in Thames Valley. In 2019, there were just 68 such cases across the country.

For England as a whole, serious fraud cases took just over a year to be completed after a charge was first raised – having taken less than six months at the same point in 2019.

In June 2019, the median wait for outstanding serious fraud cases in England was 14 weeks – while in Thames Valley this was 13 weeks.

Fraud has been under greater scrutiny in recent years, as figures suggest the number of offences has increased over the past decade. The National Fraud Intelligence Bureau registered more than a million cases of fraud in the year to March.

However, given only the most serious cases reach the Crown Court, it is difficult to tell whether this is contributing to a backlog in cases. Minor cases are instead generally dealt with by magistrates.

A Ministry of Justice spokesperson said: "People who break the law must face justice, and more criminal cases are now reaching the Crown Court than at any point over the last two years."

"We are letting our courts run at full throttle – lifting the cap on the number of days courts can sit for a third year, recruiting more judges, and investing more in our courts, including in Magistrates' courts where more than 90 per cent of criminal cases are dealt with," they added.

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Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel Work Programme 2023/24

15 September 2023	TVP Force Review - Neighbourhood Policing Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact Management – Update on performance of “101” Calls and on-line reporting • Operation Deter – a zero tolerance approach to knife crime – Update on successes. • Update report on police recruitment and retention in TVP along with ethnicity representation/positive action initiatives • Formation of a Task and Finish Groups – Violence against Women and Girls and Road Safety Issues • Chairman/PCC Update • Topical Issues Report • Work Programme
3 November 2023	Fighting serious organised crime – County Lines and the protection of the vulnerable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Assurance Report – Joint Independent Audit Committee • Race Action Plan and the work of the Independent Scrutiny Oversight Board (ISOB) / Race and BAME representation in TVP (Deferred) • Violence against Women and Girls, partnership working, education programme • Update on CCTV across Thames Valley • Chairman/PCC Updates /Topical Issues • Work Programme

26 January 2024	PCC Draft Budget – To review and make recommendations on the proposed precept for 2024/25 and to receive a report from the Budget Task and Finish Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutiny of the Proposed Police Precept – Questions to the Police and Crime Commissioner • Domestic Abuse • Report of the Road Safety Task and Finish Group • Progress on Contact Management • Road Safety Strategy – to be provided with an update • Section 92 payments • Chairman/PCC Updates /Topical Issues • Work Programme
15 March 2024	Victims First – The services which the PCC commissions to support victims of crime across the Thames Valley.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on RESTART • Update on Community Safety funding from the PCC • Report of the Strategy for Violence against Women and Children • Operation Deter – Detailed Report on Statistics on outcome of arrests • New Crime and Criminal Justice structure, linking it in with the wider custody 2025 strategy • Chairman/PCC Updates /Topical Issues • Work Programme • Professional & Ethical Standards Panel Annual Assurance Report 2022 • Work of the Rural Crime Task Force (to include wildlife crimes)

At the last meeting of the Panel, the PCC asked that a future meeting of the Panel be convened at a TVP establishment such as the Training college (November or January).

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