

MINUTES OF CHILTERN & SOUTH BUCKS POLICING ISSUES FORUM

Wednesday 26th July 2023, via MS Teams

In attendance:

Chiltern & S Bucks Policing Issues Forum: Andy Garnett (in the Chair), Robert Gibson
Thames Valley Police (TVP): Inspector James Ellis

Approx 25 other participants

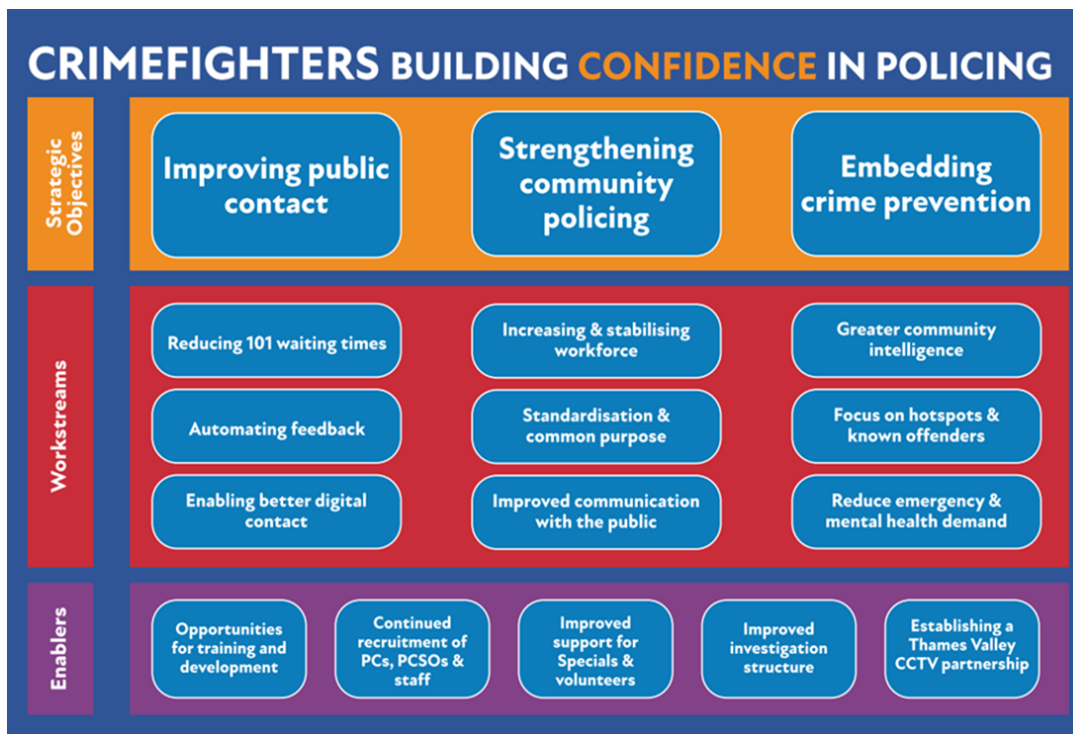
Presentation by Inspector James Ellis, TVP Neighbourhood Inspector, South Buckinghamshire Policing Area

Insp Ellis began with a slide reminding attendants of Neighbourhood Policing's position within the overall structure of the South Buckinghamshire Local Policing Area.

He then moved on to observations about the upcoming restructuring of TVP and the new *Crimefighters* strategy of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner.

Using a graphic from the Police and Crime Commissioner's 'Crimefighters - Building Confidence in Policing' strategy, he identified the major strands of the strategy.:

- Focus on those offences of greatest importance to our communities; using proactive tactics to detect & deter Neighbourhood Crime
- Engagement to restore public confidence in police, especially with hard-to-reach communities.
- Increasing geographic Neighbourhood constable numbers.
- Redirecting demand to more appropriate agencies, such as mental health, ambulance service etc.



Insp Ellis explained that Buckinghamshire will be the first phase of the overall TVP restructuring. It will be in place in November, resulting in one Local Command Unit for Buckinghamshire ex Milton Keynes. The policing area will then be identical to Buckinghamshire Council, which should enable a broader resource base for meeting demand.

Chiltern & South Bucks districts will still retain neighbourhood teams with geographic ownership. But it is yet to be fully determined how this will affect existing staffing levels. The intention is to look to double the number of geographic Neighbourhood Police Constables, which will include student officers on attachment. There may be some reduction in PCSO numbers, probably balanced in numbers by additional PCs. However, the existing problem-solving team will be disbanded. There may be some 'flex' in the number of neighbourhood Sergeants; this remains to be seen.

There is a need to be far more conscious about being focussed on CRIME RELATED calls for service, ie to deflect to other agencies where more appropriate.

Update on local policing issues:

Local **Burglary** rates have lessened in the past quarter. Affluent rural communities on arterial roads are still suffering sporadic offences.

Operations continue to bring offending groups to justice, and reductions are attributed in no small part to the arrests, prosecutions and convictions which have been achieved over recent months.

Operation Pandilla has been the most recent example of proactive work; resulting in over 100 arrests over 3 days. This involved collaboration with neighbouring police forces, to deny criminals the use of the national road network.

Multiple **Drugs** warrants have been executed over the past quarter, following the Forum electing it as a priority.

In the last month, two cannabis factories have been dismantled, each with a yield estimated in the region of £100,000 each. As such operations can be harvested 4 times a year, this is a significant denial of revenue to local criminality.

Speeding continues to receive attention from Neighbourhood teams. Neighbourhood policing newsletters provide data as to the level of enforcement activity contributed by the neighbourhood teams, and the results. The latest newsletters can always be found on the Home page of the Forum's website.

Generally, of those sites where residents perceive excess speeds, little data has been found to support this view.

It was observed that no new Community Speedwatch schemes had apparently been set up in the past 3 months.

Q: Princes Risborough resident unaware of policing changes.

A: It will be happening in Princes Risborough as across the whole county - doubtless this will be communicated locally soon.

Q: What is the best way to report 'low-level AntiSocial Behaviour'?

A: Hope that good lines of communication exist between local Parish Councils and local neighbourhood teams. Residents can and should report crimes via 101 or the TVP website.

Q: How can we get hold of anti-graffiti products?

A; Recommend searching the web, difficult to make personal endorsements. It is certainly recommended to 'target harden' where possible.

Q: Can night time ASB be effectively policed?

A: If targeting a specific problem, then resource can be assigned until (say) 1am.

Q: What are the plans for the Police property estate, making reference for example to the offices in Amersham, and the small office in Great Missenden?

A: We do probably have more smaller offices than in other areas of TVP. But even in the event of closure, this does not mean a reduction in Policing. Local policing is 'hub based' and the emphasis is to be out in the community.

Q: Can Police crack down on bad behaviour such as parking on pavements? So much is reported on Facebook, should TVP not be monitoring it?

A; TVP is much more active these days in communicating information through social media channels, but cannot monitor all external accounts. Reporting via 101 or the website is the recommended method for the public.

One attendee noted a shift in vehicle crime, from catalytic converters to targetting tools. Possibly related to lower metals prices.

Presentation on Survey Results by Robert Gibson

Presentation available on website. Includes:

- purpose of consultation and survey, in context of broader surveys by Buckinghamshire Council Community Safety and Thames valley Police and Crime Commissioner
- engagement
- survey results.(400 responses)
- top choices, including breakdowns by Community Board areas and under 18s
- crime stats from POLICE.UK
- Community Speedwatch
- comments passed on to appropriate recipients within TVP, common 'Other' responses..

Engagement was down on the previous survey, which attracted 582 responses. It was suggested that this might reflect less acute anxiety about burglaries. The previous survey had been in the wake of an upsurge in burglaries, including a sharp spike in November 2022.

Thankfully, the trend has been downwards since. The greatest falls in engagement had been in the Amersham and Denham, Gerrards Cross & Chalfonts Community Board areas, where anxiety had been highest. (Though these two CBs still had the highest vote shares for Burglary).

400 votes provide a credible sample, in particular given the strength of certain trends. Whilst BURGLARY retained the greatest share of votes, it fell from a dominant 65% to 52.5%. The real 'story' from this survey was the advance of SPEEDING, to a clear second choice, up from 36% to 44%, and the top choice in 3 of the 7 Community Board areas. It appears that no new Community Speedwatch schemes had been set up in the past 3 months, despite the significant improvements of the past couple of years.

DRUGS, which had been made a focus area in the previous Forum meeting, was also a riser, from 35% to 40%, with ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR steady at #4, with 33%.

Votes for VEHICLE CRIME rose from 29% to 33%, with particular concern evident from the votes from CBs in the South of the area.

Whilst the top 4 categories remain pretty consistent across surveys, close attention is paid to the COMMENTS of residents. These had already been collated and passed on to the Police, for appropriate consideration and action.

Priority Setting Discussion

It was agreed that the focus areas were pretty clearly defined by the survey results. Burglary and Speeding were the clear first two choices. In addition, it would be sensible, having had Drugs reintroduced as a focus area at the previous meeting, it would make little sense to drop it now.

CHOICES MADE: BURGLARY, SPEEDING, DRUGS.

Proposed meeting with Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner

Andy Garnett proposed that the Forum should invite Matthew Barber, Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner, to a meeting with residents in early autumn. This would be especially timely, given the various initiatives relating to community and neighbourhood policing. It was agreed that this would be a good idea, and Andy will pursue this.

It was also suggested that it would be useful to hear from a representative of roads policing at the next meeting. Insp Ellis offered a word of caution, owing to likely operational demands, but undertook to look into the possibility.

Robert Gibson
1st August 2023