

NOTES OF NOTTINGHAMSHIRE POLICE & CRIME PANEL

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TELECONFERENCE

MONDAY 30TH MARCH 2020 AT 2PM

PARTICIPANTS

Christine Goldstraw - Chair, Police & Crime Panel (PCP)

David Ellis - Vice Chair, PCP

Paddy Tipping - Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)

Craig Guildford - Chief Constable of Nottinghamshire

Kevin Dennis - Chief Executive, Office of the PCC

Keith Ford - Nottinghamshire County Council

Pete Barker - Nottinghamshire County Council

The Commissioner began by covering the following main points:

General

- The Force is currently in a good place, with increased resources allowing the Force to be more proactive.

Domestic Violence

- Nationally and locally there is an increase in concern about the potential for domestic violence (DV) to increase. The local DVA helpline is reporting increasing pressure from calls, but crimes reported to the police is down.
- The OPCC and Force is in touch with support agencies who are experiencing problems because of COVID-19.
- Research from China suggests that incidents increased three-fold in the first 3 months of the crisis, though the numbers are small so need to be treated with caution.

Crime Levels

- Owing to the lockdown crime is down both nationally and in Nottinghamshire by approximately 20%.
- The nature of crime is likely to change.
- The trend on the main categories of crime is down and has been for some time.
- Because of the lockdown and the end of the financial year it will be the first time for a long time that it can be announced that crime has fallen compared to the previous year.

Operation Reacher

- The rollout of Operation Reacher has begun with Gedling being the first area. It is going well.

Stop and Search

- Increased significantly both nationally and in Nottinghamshire.
- The positive outcomes remain high in Nottinghamshire, above any elsewhere in the country.

Knife Crime

- Reducing in Nottinghamshire, especially in the City.

Call Handling

- Problems have not been with '999' calls, where the Force has been a national leader, but with '101' calls.
- The number of abandoned '101' calls has fallen dramatically.
- A new system has now been introduced, there are some issues but generally it is going well.

Budget

- A £500k overspend is currently being forecast but it is hoped this will reduce to around £300k - £350k by the end of the financial year.
- This is a good result considering the overall budget is £200m.

Operation Uplift

- The drive to recruit more officers continues.
- Target of 108 more officers in place by 31st March 2021 achieved one year early.
- The Force is in the position of being able to claim the performance grant, and because it is ahead of schedule can claim an additional £3m, £1.25m of which will be spent on recruitment, with a further 150 new officers to be in post by 31st March 2021.
- Recruitment to start in mid-year to allow the recent new starters to settle in.
- Over a 2-year period 300 extra officers have been recruited, which as a percentage is higher than any other force in the country.

Violence Reduction Unit (VRU)

- Funding will be the same as last year (£880k).
- May have to devote extra resources if same level of support from the third sector is not available.

Surge Money

- This is the extra grant of £1.5m to be used to increase the visible presence of policing.
- Grant to be reduced to £1m next year and the application to the Home Office for this needs to be submitted by the end of this week (the Chief Constable is in discussions with the Home Office about this).

Following the Commissioner's introductory remarks, questions and comments from Panel Members which had been collated ahead of the teleconference were shared by the Chair and Vice-Chair and the following responses were made by the Commissioner and Chief Constable:-

Operation Reacher

- The success of the operation has been featured in newspaper articles and has been acknowledged by the Government.
- The Chief Constable has advertised for officers to join the operation as it is rolled out across Nottinghamshire.
- Interviews have taken place and a number of sergeants have been identified for the operation.
- The coronavirus will delay progress but not significantly.

Domestic Violence (DV)

- The issue is very much on the Force's mind at this time.
- Increased social media activity is taking place to make sure public know services are available.
- Information has been made available in the press.
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- Weekly contact is being made with service providers to check their situation.
- Commissioner is tweeting regularly.
- Silent calling initiative launched – caller can add '55' at the end of dialling to alert others that they are at risk.
- Increased use of internet as children are at home should make discreet on-line access easier.
- Situation will continue to be monitored closely.

Performance & Insight Report

- Greater clarity as a result of the new format.
- Some errors, small but numerous eg outturn on pay. Commissioner will review and write to Panel if necessary.
- Local authorities receive the raw data via a spreadsheet regarding the survey into public confidence, so details of the County / City split and a further breakdown of information by areas is available. The Commissioner will inform Panel members which contacts in the local authorities receive the information.

Stop and Search

- Creditable that the percentage of successful stop and searches has remained largely the same despite the large increase in the numbers undertaken. The Chief Constable gave the reassurance that there was absolutely no possibility in the current circumstances of the searching becoming more random and undoing all of the good work that has gone on before in making targeted and intelligence-led searches.
- Changes in recording mean that it is no longer possible to compare stop and search figures between forces but the initiative is being managed carefully in-house and it is clear that progress is still being made.

Mental Health Related Incidents

- Surprise was expressed at the high level of mental health related incidents (1534 per month), made apparent by the new performance information which includes actual numbers (as requested by Panel members in the past).
- Discussions are taking place with the Home Office around a framework for dealing with mental health incidents
- Forces have been allowed to recruit 20k more officers nationally, but a large number of people are required to deal with such incidents.
- Some of the incidents are crime-based and can be time consuming given the complexity of the people involved.
- Triage now in place during the day and in the evening. Only acute calls are dealt with but this still saves officer time.
- The work commissioned from Crest around demand will detail the officer time spent on these incidents. The Commissioner will let the Panel know the details.
- A high proportion of police time continues to be spent on non-crime related matters.

Gun Crime

- Increase was due to ongoing feuds.
- Last year saw the highest number of firearms captured.
- 'BB' gun offences are included in the figures.
- The Chief Constable has no operational concerns in this respect.

Budget Monitoring

- There are budget monitoring problems around the Multi Force Shared Service (MFSS) with a delay in obtaining information, as detailed in the papers and somewhat rudimentary in-house systems are therefore having to be used in tandem.
- The Panel's concerns in this area are noted and further work is ongoing to improve the situation.

Complaints Handling

- Some increases in timescales relate to changes in clearing up data sets.
- Aware that progress is needed in this area.
- New 'Centurion' system has been introduced with the Force taking the national lead. Two legacy cases have hampered progress with implementation in Nottinghamshire.

Staff Sickness

- Traditionally absences have been as a result of physical injuries, now they are more often around stress.
- Force is trying to tackle the problem.
There has been no dramatic change to the figures, especially over the long term.
- The rate in Nottinghamshire is 13%, in the Met it is 22%. (Coronavirus figures.)

COVID-19 / Coronavirus

- The Force has a stepped, operational plan in place which will depend on both the death rate and the staff absence rate.

- The Force has invested in laptops in the past and those self-isolating are working remotely.
- Custody suites are open.
- Custodial sentence was given to individual who spat at officers.
- Case of those who stole bikes from QMC will be heard at Crown Court where longer sentences will be available if found guilty.
- A bike from the Force's stock of found/confiscated bikes will be given to one of the nurses who had her own bike stolen.
- Longer term investigations will be scaled down depending on the severity of the crisis as priority will be given to getting officers to where they are needed.
- The Chief Constable chairs the Local Resilience Forum (LRF)
- Assistant Chief Constable, Kate Meynell, is heading up the Force's approach to the crisis.
- Public Health have been engaged for weeks and have tried and tested plans in place.
- Chief Constables have dedicated ministerial support. This is provided by Chris Pincher in Nottinghamshire and the Chief Constable spoke to him at the weekend.
- The Chief Constable is in contact with the Chief Executives of QMC and the County Council on humanitarian aspects of the crisis.
- Nottinghamshire's approach is 'Coach & Inform' – and most people in Nottinghamshire seem to be getting the message.
- In terms of equipment, the Force is behind the NHS in the queue, but stocks were bolstered last week.
- Thames Valley and the Met Forces are the worst affected, with the East Midlands and the North East the least affected. Officers are only likely to be asked to serve in a different area if there are problems with public disorder.
- Balance between liberty and safety must be struck.
- In Nottinghamshire policing is by consent - an internal message has gone out to everyone and there is a daily blog for staff where the latest information and expectations are explained. The Force is there to serve the public.
- The OPCC sits in on twice weekly 'gold' meetings where demand and absence information is shared and processes are in place to keep in contact with the third sector.
- The OPCC is operating a 'skeleton staff' within the office but systems are working and staff can cope.

Future Panel Meetings

The legislation has changed and guidance is awaited about the possibility of holding virtual meetings.

The Teleconference ended at 2.56pm