

Planned improvements

Each year the Authority produces a Policing Plan, outlining its priorities for the coming year. Last year's priorities included improving the way in which we work with victims and witnesses; and giving the public more opportunity to influence policing in their area.

Caring for victims and witnesses

Initiatives introduced at both local and national level have made a big difference to victims and witnesses. Importantly, details of crimes are now recorded more speedily, often while the officer is still with the victim, which in turn has had a positive effect on satisfaction figures.

Witness Care Units have been set up at Bedford and Luton to provide support to witnesses of crime, and keep them informed of case developments.

Victims' Information Packs have been introduced for all victims of crime, providing, among other things, details of what happens once they have reported a crime and the minimum service levels they can expect from Bedfordshire Police.

As a result satisfaction levels have risen for almost all aspects of victim care.

Taking local views into account

The 'Stakeholder Policing' project is giving residents in Dunstable's Downside Estate and Luton's Farley Hill a real influence in how the police work in their area. A local agreement sets out the key issues identified by residents and the type of service the police will provide to tackle them.

Each division has now appointed a Customer Care Manager to respond to complaints and issues relating to quality of service.

Planning ahead

The Policing Plan for this year has to take into account some unique challenges. In addition to the ongoing restructuring debate, this year sees the two policing divisions serving the area covered by Bedfordshire County Council amalgamate into one.

Benefits will be felt in improved community engagement and improved working with local authorities and other partners, economies of scale and removal of duplication to help us focus resources towards our key priorities. Luton continues to be policed by a separate, dedicated division.

In operational terms we will focus on two key priorities in the coming year:

Reassurance

Increasing community confidence, safety and satisfaction and implementing neighbourhood policing.

Crime Management

Helping to drive down crime by improving investigation and end-to-end crime management processes.

These priorities are supported by what you have been telling us in consultation and via the 'Good Job' survey undertaken by MORI. There is more about the MORI poll on the inner pages, where you can see what areas gave most cause for concern and what we are doing about them.

The full policing plan is available on our website: www.bedfordshirepoliceauthority.co.uk



“ There has been much debate about the proposals for police force mergers, both in the press and between the parties involved. The people of Bedfordshire and Luton should be assured, we are totally committed to negotiating the best possible solution for those who live and work in the county, including all the officers and staff of Bedfordshire Police Force and Authority. ”

Peter F Conniff, Chairman, Bedfordshire Police Authority.



Police Force mergers... what do you think?

Earlier this month Bedfordshire Police Authority decided against volunteering to merge with Hertfordshire and Essex Police Forces and Authorities. So too did Hertfordshire and Essex Authorities.

They felt that they had not been given satisfactory answers to questions they had raised with the Home Office in terms of governance and local accountability, council tax harmonisation, funding of the merger itself and ongoing financial consideration. Other serious concerns include the implications the merger will have on personnel, the rationalising of technology, and the fact that the business cases submitted in December had been over-ruled.

Nationally many Authorities have objected to the general approach the Home Secretary has adopted in order to take this forward. Even though it is accepted that there may be a need to review the current structure in order to make it as efficient and effective as possible to meet the current demands on policing, it is felt that if the process is rushed without thorough consideration of the implications, then there is the potential for policing services to suffer.

However, it is widely expected that where Police Authorities have not volunteered the Home Secretary will seek to impose the mergers by April 2008 or sooner.

Peter Conniff, Chairman of the Authority explained: "We do recognise that a larger police force may well provide more resilience to fight crime and we are not totally opposed to the concept. However, we do feel that our preferred option, i.e. a merger with Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire, would be the better solution.

"The Authority believes that there is no natural link between Bedfordshire and Essex. There is no common boundary between the counties, the transport system is inferior to that serving Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire and, if the merger with Essex goes ahead, there will be two international airports served by one police force, which the Authority feels is potentially problematic, especially given the fact that the policing of the two airports is currently funded differently.

"The task ahead, if we are to merge, is huge. Whatever the outcome of our negotiations, there will be a significant increase in workload for all those involved and during that period we will also need to focus on preventing any downturn in performance."

The Authority is urging the public to give us their opinions on this, the biggest change to policing in nearly thirty years. This information will be fed back to the Home Secretary, as we feel that it is important that he knows how you feel about his proposals.

Why it's happening

The Home Office and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary believe that any disruption to local policing can be effectively minimised during the restructure process, as local divisional units already provide the vast bulk of everyday policing services. They say that even when these larger strategic police forces come into effect, that policing will continue to be delivered locally, responding to local concerns about crime and anti-social behaviour.

They also believe that the creation of strategic forces with sufficient capacity and resilience to deal with major investigations or public order incidents will help safeguard local policing by reducing the need to 'borrow' officers from neighbourhood policing teams.

Are you for or against the proposal for a strategic police force area covering Bedfordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire? For Against Don't know

Text us on 07788 443350

Police Force mergers... what do you think?

There are various ways you can share your views with us. You can complete this survey and return it to us, or write to us at:

Bedfordshire Police Authority, FREEPOST ANG 5778, Bridgebury House, Woburn Road, Kempston, Bedford MK43 9ZD

Complete this survey online at: www.bedfordshirepoliceauthority.co.uk

Email us at: info@bedfordshirepoliceauthority.co.uk

Text us on: 07788 443350

Once we have collated your responses and responded to the Home Office, relevant information will be posted on our website (www.bedfordshirepoliceauthority.co.uk) or sent to you in hard copy on request.

Survey

1. Are you for or against the proposal for a strategic police force area covering Bedfordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire?

For Against Don't know

2. Do you think there are potential benefits from the proposal of a strategic police force area covering Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Essex?

Yes (go to question 3)

No (go to question 4)

3. The following areas have been identified as potential benefits of any merger. Please rank which areas you think would most improve the service provided to you if Beds, Herts and Essex forces were to merge (with '1' being your greatest benefit):

Improved communications

Increased efficiency/savings

Reduced bureaucracy

Workforce of greater resilience

Other? Please rank and specify:

4. Do you have concerns about the proposal for the establishment of a strategic police force area covering Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Essex?

Yes (go to question 5)

No (go to 'About You' section)

5. The following concerns have been raised about any merger. Please rank which areas would cause you most concern if Beds, Herts and Essex forces were to merge (with '1' being your greatest concern):

Increased numbers of Police Officers being borrowed from rural areas to respond to urban incidents

Loss of identity with local police

Loss of local accountability

Loss of local knowledge

Slower response times to incidents

Other? Please rank and specify:

About You: To get an overall picture of different peoples' views it would be helpful if you could complete the following questions:

How old are you?

21 or under 22-35 36-50 51-75 over 75

Are you male or female?

Female Male

What is your ethnicity?

Asian or Asian British Black or Black British Chinese

Mixed Ethnicity White

Other (please specify)

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Responses by 30th June 2006 please



A summary of this report is available in different formats or languages on request.

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Jack's Retirement Presentation



Police Dog Jack retires after seven years service with a presentation from the Police Authority including a new bed, a cuddly toy and large bone! Jack is seen here with his handler PC Andy Parker and Peter Conniff.

A good job?

Last year the Police Authority commissioned MORI to carry out a survey to find out whether or not the people of Bedfordshire and Luton feel that the police are doing a 'good job' and, more importantly, what they feel is actually meant by a 'good job'.

Significantly, we discovered that 78% felt that performance was 'very' or 'fairly' good. This is a higher figure than the British Crime Survey, which is undertaken on a national basis.

The survey also reinforced our view that people want to see what action we are taking to improve performance in terms of:

- Violent crime • Burglary • Drugs crime • Detecting criminals

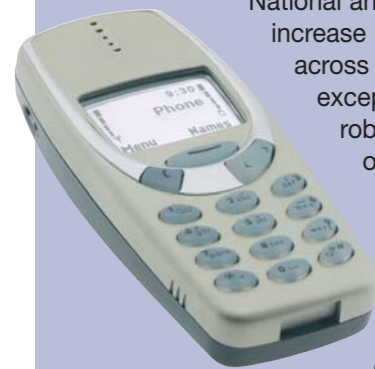
We also learned that you need more information on our work; you want to see more police officers in your neighbourhoods; and you want all forms of anti-social behaviour tackled effectively.

Here you can read a little of what has happened so far and learn how we will police your neighbourhood in the future.



Stamping on violence

National and local media have highlighted the increase in violent crimes such as robbery right across the country. Bedfordshire is no exception – last year there were 288 more robberies than in the previous year. Many of these robberies relate to the rise in popularity of mobile phones and MP3 music players – and we know that it is often young people who commit, or are a victim of, this type of crime.



Chairman of the Police Authority, Peter Conniff, stresses the need for people to take care of their personal belongings, saying: "Mobile phones and iPods are expensive and desirable. Walking down the street with something worth around £300 clearly on view is not really advisable as it provides criminals with an easy opportunity."

As well as targeting offenders through DNA and forensics we are working with our partners to educate members of the public how to reduce the risk of becoming a victim of crime.

It is no surprise that violent crime is often associated with alcohol consumption. Through Bed:Safe, Luton:Safe and 'Operation Lead', Bedfordshire Police is taking positive steps to work with partners and break the link between alcohol and violence and make the night time experience in our communities safer. Last year these efforts were successful in reducing offences of violence against the person by 3.4%.

Deputy Chief Constable Martin Stuart said: "Detailed plans are in place to address the number of recorded crimes, particularly in regard to robbery and the overall number of detections and we are seeing results!"

Under lock and key

In 2004/5 Bedfordshire Police reduced burglary by a massive 20%, and in 2005/6 the level of burglary was reduced by a further 8.2% compared to the year before – that's 320 fewer houses being burgled.

The launch in November of Operation 'Christmas Presence' saw the force targeting known criminals with the aim of getting them to court and sentenced for crimes they have committed. The key message to criminals was: "Give yourself up now or wait for a knock at the door – because we are coming to get you".

By the end of the first week there had been 118 arrests and 20 people gave themselves up at police stations. 'Christmas Presence' saw real results and by the time of its conclusion in January 2006 over 370 arrests had been made.

The operation also aimed to help the public learn different ways in which they can protect themselves from becoming victims of crime – and not just in the run up to Christmas. This advice covered a wide range of potential issues from discouraging excessive drinking to safe Christmas shopping and burglary prevention.



The spectacular success of 'Christmas Presence' encouraged the force to launch Operation 'Ever Present' early in 2006, which continues to target those offenders who think they can avoid capture. DNA forensic evidence plays a big part in identifying offenders and ANPR number plate reading technology is used to identify wanted drivers and stolen vehicles. Over 120 arrests were made during February alone.



Hitting on drugs

Months of painstaking observation, intelligence gathering and planning by the Force Drugs and Serious Crime Unit have been paying dividends over the past six months. In March two men were arrested in Bedford for conspiracy to supply Class A drugs. A further three arrests led to the recovery of cocaine – wrapped up and ready for sale on the street. So far nineteen people have been arrested across Bedford, Dunstable and Luton. Drugs including heroin and crack have been recovered and fifteen people have been charged with drug-related offences – mostly conspiracy to supply Class A drugs and more arrests are anticipated in the near future.

In February, a drug factory in a house was found in a quiet back road of Bedford and it took police nine hours to transport up to 1000 cannabis plants



(some of which were two feet tall!) and high-tech watering and lighting systems back to Greyfriars Police Station. They also discovered that the electricity supply had been illegally wired straight from the mains, avoiding the meter box and the risk of falling under suspicion.

The public have also been playing their part in stamping out drug crime with another cannabis factory discovered in Luton in November last year. Concerned neighbours alerted the police, who executed a search warrant on a house.

A man was arrested and over 300 plants and 20 bags of cannabis were seized – bringing the end to a lucrative but socially unacceptable and illegal business.

All these efforts have led to an increase in the number of criminals charged with drug trafficking offences – helping to make our communities and streets safer.



By April 2008 we want every community in Bedfordshire to benefit from...



Ultimately, local Safer Neighbourhood Teams will be made up of a mix of people from the police, other agencies and the voluntary sector who, collectively, are able to work on all the issues affecting quality of life. For now, we are concentrating on developing the policing element of Safer Neighbourhoods, identifying where best to locate teams and how to engage with local communities to identify and tackle problems.

What differences will you see?

- Safer Neighbourhood Teams will be accessible in your communities, making it easier for you to contact them.
- You will see more police community support officers patrolling in your area – providing a visible police presence.
- You will have the opportunity to contribute to the safety of your neighbourhood by letting your Safer Neighbourhood Team know what the local issues are, and work with them to identify the actions needed to resolve them.
- You will know who your local police contact is and how to get in touch with them.
- There will be more ways to find out what your Safer Neighbourhood Team has been doing.
- A reduction in crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.



County (Bedfordshire excluding Luton)

As mentioned previously, we are currently reviewing these teams due to the merger of two Divisions. The current local team contacts are:

Bedford Town Centre
Contact Sergeant Pete Byrne on 01234 275362

Queens Park / Harpur, Castle, Brickhill, Kempston, Gostwick Road
Contact Sergeant Jason Geary or Sergeant Emma Nicol on 01234 275051

Riseley Rural North – Melchbourne & Yelden, Dean & Shelton, Swineshead, Pertenhall, Bolnhurst & Keysoe, Bletsoe, Thurleigh, Colmworth, Staploe, Roxton, Great Barford, Little Barford, Milton Ernest, Pavenham, Oakley, Stevington, Ravensden, Wilden, Renhold
Contact Sergeant Stephanie Crighton on 01234 275175

Riseley Rural South – Riseley, Knotting & Souldrop, Sharnbrook, Odell, Felmersham, Carlton & Chellington, Harrold, Podington, Wymington, Turvey, Stagsden, Bromham, Biddenham, Kempston rural, Wootton, Stewartby, Elstow, Wilshamstead, Cardington, Cople, Willington
Contact Acting Sergeant Darren Wright on 01234 275175

Biggleswade – Biggleswade, Sandy and Potton areas
Contact Acting Sergeant David Needham on 01234 842549

Amphill – Amphill, Stotfold, Shefford, Flitwick, Arlesey, Cranfield,
Contact Sergeant Nigel Denham on 01234 842604

Houghton Regis – Houghton Regis, Toddington, Chalgrave, Sundon, Barton-Le-Clay, Streatley
Contact Sergeant Colin Eldred on 01582 473342

Leighton Buzzard – Leighton-Linslade, Heath & Reach, Hockliffe, Eggington, Tilsforth, Stanbridge, Billington, Eaton Bray, Totternhoe.
Contact Sergeant Chris Bull on 01582 473492

Dunstable – Dunstable, Hyde, Caddington & Slip End, Kensworth, Studham, Whipsnade
Contact Sergeant Jim Kinnear on 01582 473333

Making neighbourhoods safer, together

Catching Criminals

DNA and forensic evidence will continue to help identify those who rob and commit crime. Through use of the National Intelligence Model we intend to target selected prolific offenders and those who handle or deal in stolen goods and we will use new powers under the Proceeds of Crime Act to seize the assets of offenders and handlers.

The public have a part to play too, and as well as supporting victims of burglary we will continue to provide crime prevention advice and property marking campaigns.



The story so far

- The pilot for Neighbourhood Policing in Bedfordshire is being carried out in Luton; five Safer Neighbourhood Teams have been set up and are already working closely with their local communities.
- With the merger of the remaining two Bedfordshire Divisions to form the new County Division (Bedfordshire excluding Luton), we are currently looking at how many Safer Neighbourhood Teams are needed, where they need to be located and when they will be set up. We will have a clear picture of this by August 2006.
- We have started a rolling recruitment process that will see at least 48 new police community support officers (PCSOs) join Bedfordshire Police during 2006.

Safer Neighbourhood Team – your key contacts

If you would like to find out more about Safer Neighbourhoods and get involved in determining policing priorities for your neighbourhood, contact your local team.

Luton

North Luton – Sundon Park, Northwell, Bramingham, Limbury and Icknield
Contact Sergeant Frank Griffin on 01582 394423

West Luton – Leagrave, Lewsey and Challowey
Contact Sergeant Martin Cahill on 01582 394418

Central Luton – High Town, Biscot, Barnfield and Saints
Contact Sergeant Peter Nouch on 01582 394152

East Luton – Stopsley, Round Green, Wigmore and Crawley
Contact Sergeant Paul Lowe on 01582 487232

South Luton – Dallow, Farley and South
Contact Stephen Vestroy on 01582 394196