

Welcome to the latest edition of the Police Authority's e.newsletter, produced to keep you informed about policing developments across the county.

The Authority has just held its AGM, heralding the start of a challenging, and possibly the last, year for the Police Authority. This newsletter looks at the new appointments for the Authority, Police Performance and the way we are driving down crime, and the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill.

If you have any questions about any of the articles in this newsletter, or indeed any other area of our responsibilities, then please get in touch.

Peter F Conniff, Chair, Bedfordshire Police Authority

Stephanie McMenemy, Chief Executive, Bedfordshire Police Authority

Peter Conniff Re-elected as Chair of the Police Authority

At the Authority's AGM, held on 20 May 2011, Peter Conniff was unanimously re-elected as Chair of the Authority. This will be Peter's seventh year as Chair.

Peter said that he was proud to be re-elected and that the coming twelve months promise to see new challenges on top of those with which everyone is well acquainted.

Residents will therefore pay £144.77 per annum (which works out at 40p a day) in 2011-12 for a Band D property, which is the same rate as last year.

Talking about the financial situation he said that the next four years will be very difficult for Bedfordshire Police and this is why the extended collaboration programme is so important. He said: "Collaboration with other forces, in particular Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire, will help us to maintain the numbers of our Neighbourhood Officers for at least another year."

Reflecting on the last twelve months, Mr Conniff acknowledged that the merger debate early in the year had had a clear impact on the Force's focus and performance. "Once the 'will we, won't we' merger debate was over, whatever your point of view on the merits or otherwise, we all moved on," he said.

"Since then the Authority has appointed a new Chief Constable and Deputy Chief Constable who have refocused work on police performance and now we are seeing some optimistic results although we, and the public, need to be confident that these improvements can be sustained."

Working with Partners

Linda Hockey, another Independent Member, was re-elected for a second term as vice-chair. This role has special responsibility for partnership working which sees Linda in close contact with our statutory partners. She also is the Authority's representative on the Local Strategic Partnership.

Penny Fletcher (Independent Member) was appointed Chair of the Performance Scrutiny Committee and will also represent the Authority on the three local Community Safety Partnerships.

John Williams (Independent Member) will be the Authority's representative on the Safeguarding Children Boards.

Other Committee Chairs have also been appointed:

1. Resources Scrutiny – Fiona Chapman (Cllr Member)
2. Compliance and Risk Management – Tony Brown (Independent Member)

3. Standards – John Jones (Independent Lay Member)

Post Election News

Following the local elections we welcome some new appointments to the Authority. Bedford Borough Councillor Colleen Atkins returns to the Authority after a two year break, while Doreen Gurney and Iain MacKilligan from Central Bedfordshire have been appointed for the first time.

At the time of writing this newsletter, we are waiting for confirmation of the Luton Borough Councillor appointments.

All Councillor appointments to the Authority are made by the Joint Appointments Committee and are not the responsibility of the Police Authority.

We would also like to wish outgoing members, John Mingay, Alison Graham, Christina Turner and Lakbir Singh, well in the future and thank them for their contribution to the work of the Authority.

Performance

By the end of the 2010-11 year the force had recorded a disappointing increase in overall recorded crime of 3.5% (1495 more crimes compared to the previous year).

Members of the Authority agreed that the year had been a year of two halves, with the merger debate contributing to the downturn in police performance in the first six months. However, the noticeable up-swing seen over the last six months of the year has continued into the first month of the current year.

To ensure the momentum is maintained, the Performance Scrutiny Committee has asked for a report on Serious Acquisitive Crime, looking at areas where crime has increased the most.

We know that, across all three local authority areas in Bedfordshire, anti-social behaviour (ASB) continues to be a key concern for residents. When considering the Force's performance the Police Authority was therefore particularly pleased to see a reduction in reported ASB incidents of 13% (over 5000) in 2010/11.

All three authorities have identified tackling ASB as a priority area once again for the coming year, and our ambition is to improve on this performance and provide residents with positive outcomes and reassurance. We are grateful to the number of partners who have been involved with the Operation Vision days that have been taking place across the county, details of which can be found later on in this newsletter.

It is also satisfying that criminals have learned the hard way that their ill-gotten gains can be taken away from them. Bedfordshire Police recovered nearly £1.5m in the last 12 months! A proportion of this is awarded to the force to help reduce crime.

The upward trend in performance is illustrated on the chart below, which shows the recorded crime figures for April 2011 compared to April 2010:

1. Violence Against the Person – 828 offences, an increase of 13.4% (equating to 98 more victims)
2. Sexual Offences – 27 offences, a reduction of 42.6% (20 fewer victims)
3. Burglary Dwelling – 235 offences, a reduction of 27.0% (87 fewer victims)
4. Burglary Other – 227 offences, a reduction of 15.9% (43 fewer victims)
5. Robbery – 63 offences, a reduction of 13.7% (10 fewer victims)
6. Theft of a vehicle – 62 offences, a reduction of 34% (32 fewer victims)
7. Theft from a vehicle – 301 offences, a reduction of 13.3% (46 fewer victims)

Three-force Collaboration saves £20M

The AGM also saw members agree a formal three way Strategic Policing Alliance with Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire, which will help all three forces to reduce the impact of the funding cuts on frontline policing services. All three Police Authorities have now signed up.

This Alliance aims to provide savings £20M across the three areas, which is the equivalent of 400 police officers. When you consider the current financial climate when officer and staff numbers are being reduced, you can see just how significant this agreement is.

The strategic alliance will reduce the impact of the cuts on the number of police officers providing visible local policing AND improve the effectiveness functions designed to prevent crime.

Areas where we think the Alliance will provide most benefit include Finance, Human Resources, Information

Technology, Contact Management, Criminal Justice, Firearms and Dogs. The aim is to design the most economic service delivery model for this type of activity across all three forces.

Local Policing

The major changes in our structure, highlighted earlier in the year, are now being developed. Over the coming months we will arrange one-to-one meetings and Partner Practitioner Days to help us work through the detailed design of these changes with you. The new structure is likely to be fully operational by the beginning of October 2011 and these meetings will form part of our engagement and consultation between now and then.

We plan to keep you fully informed of our progress and development after the partner practitioner sessions have helped us shape the final design. Look out for various consultation events over the next few months.

Every possible effort will be made to make sure that partners, and more importantly still the public, are aware of any changes they can expect to the policing service they receive, especially if it affects the local policing teams.

If you would like to know more about your local Neighbourhood Policing Team, please use the link below:

http://www.bedfordshire.police.uk/neighbourhood_teams/default.htm

Listening to Local People

In our consultation over the last year people told us that they felt policing should be focused on reducing crime and the offences which cause most harm. As a result we are working with the Force to identify and address the issues associated with:

1. Crime 'hot spots'
2. The most prolific offenders
3. Repeat victims

This work is helped tremendously by Operation Vision when police officers, PCSOs, cadets and support staff are all mobilised into an area. The aim is to talk to as many residents of a particular community as possible – by knocking on doors and asking questions about what the main concerns of the community are.

Typically, around 1000 homes are visited in a day – and other activities such as enhanced patrols by Special Constables in the evening and targeted phone calls to previous victims of crime from volunteers working in the police control room also take place.

One such day in Biggleswade recently saw over 750 homes and farms visited, when 248 people were spoken to about their issues and concerns, the majority of which focused on thefts involving outbuildings and metal. Around 50% of those contacted have signed up to the Ringmaster messaging service to enable them to receive alerts and information about crimes in their area.

The day also saw three people arrested for crimes such as money laundering, drugs offences and burglary, while British Transport Police issued 32 fixed penalty notices for fare evasion. In the evening, a team of specials returned to the streets of Sandy to carry out patrols around anti-social behaviour.

Operation Vision will be in action again throughout the year on the following days:

1. 23.06.11 - Bedford
2. 19.07.11 - Luton
3. 14.09.11 - Central
4. 13.10.11 - Bedford
5. 15.11.11 - Luton
6. 13.12.11 - Central

A number of partners have been involved in these operations to date, if any organisations would like to support future events please contact recruitingstaff@bedfordshire.pnn.police.uk in the first instance.

Operation Vision will be featured in the Crimewatch Roadshow during the week commencing 20 June.

Update on the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill

This Bill has had a somewhat rocky ride over recent weeks. After more amendments than any previous Bill, it was finally presented to the House of Lords at the end of April.

Firstly Lady Hamwee recommended that the concept of directly elected Police and Crime Commissioners was piloted instead of the proposed big bang approach. Then Nick Clegg, even though confirming that

Commissioners are still on the cards, added that 'how' is open to discussion. Next, Baroness Neville Jones (the former minister of state responsible for security and counter-terrorism who has since resigned), ruled out pilots in her response to the Lords debate on 27 April.

Then, in a surprise move, after two weeks of heated verbal ping pong Baroness Angela Harris put forward an amendment which won support by 188 votes to 176. The Baroness proposed that Police Commissioners should be appointed (not elected) by a police and crime panel, in much the same way that the Chairs of Police Authorities are selected.

Baroness Harris said directly elected police and crime commissioners posed "great risks to policing" and raised doubts about who would have the power to hire and fire chief constables.

"I am very concerned that the evidence base for making this change is incredibly thin and the consequences of implementing it have not been thoroughly researched or properly thought through," she said.

Clearly, the Government will endeavour to overturn this decision when the Bill returns to the Commons later this year. However, with the Bill still to be debated clause by clause in the House of Lords, timescales for its return to the House of Commons are uncertain. What is clear though is that there is still a lot more work required on this Bill and more public debate needed.

Meanwhile, we will have to wait and see what impact, if any, the Lords intervention will have.

We will need to work with our partners to make the transition from Police Authorities to Police and Crime Commissioners and Police and Crime Panels successful. Once we have a clear picture of the implications of the national debate we will start working with you to make this work for Bedfordshire.

Tell us what you think!

The circulation of this newsletter is growing all the time and we try to ensure that it contains information of interest to you. If you have any comments, or specific information that you would like to see included please let us know by replying to the email address that originated the newsletter.

And finally...

If you know of anyone who may like to receive a copy of this, please forward this email - and please copy us in so that we can include their address on our distribution list.

If you have any questions about any of the articles in this newsletter, or indeed any other area of our responsibilities, then please get in touch.

For further information or to contact us:

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