

Welcome to the October edition of Making Contact, the newsletter which keeps you up-to-date with policing in Bedfordshire. In it we explain the latest issues to affect policing in the county and what we are doing to improve services for local people.

Bedfordshire Police is entering a period of unprecedented change and we are committed to keeping the public, our partners and stakeholders fully informed of these developments.

1. [Value for Money](#)
2. [101 - The New Number to Call](#)
3. [Update on Police and Crime Commissioners](#)
4. [Update on re-organisation](#)
5. [Intergrated Offender Management](#)

1. Value for Money

As taxpayers, the public quite rightly expects public services to be financed properly. Delivering value for money services has always been a priority for Bedfordshire Police Authority, particularly in light of the recent budget constraints, and we are pleased to report that we have again received official recognition for our efforts.

Following an independent inspection, we were one of only five police authorities nationally to receive the highly-coveted Level 3 "Good" rating demonstrating our exceptional use of public funds.

The rating has also been backed up by a report by the Audit Commission, which assessed Bedfordshire Police Authority as "green" for its work to secure value for money – the highest rating given by the Commission for looking after public funds.

Our arrangements to ensure financial resilience as we face a severe funding gap have been met with approval by inspectors as well as the systems we have put in place to secure economy and efficiency at a time of financial hardship.

Residents can be assured that we are leading by example in our efforts to achieve economy, with our collaborative arrangements with other forces described as a beacon for other Police Authorities to follow.

Not only is it important to us to spend taxpayers' money wisely, residents can be assured we are also committed to providing them with a greater say on how we can use our resources well. The Authority has been recognised for its consultation work with the public on policing priorities and finances.

2. 101 - The New Number to Call

Contacting the police has now become much easier in Bedfordshire thanks to the launch of our new, three-digit telephone number for non-urgent enquiries.

The memorable 101 telephone number has been designed to increase accessibility to the police and people can use the line to report minor crime, discuss crime prevention advice or other non-urgent matters. Focus groups welcomed the introduction of a single easy to remember telephone that they could use from anywhere to contact the police.

It will also relieve pressure on the emergency service which spends a considerable proportion of time dealing with inappropriate 999 calls which are not genuine emergencies.

On average, Bedfordshire Police receives more than 1,300 calls a day however only about 11% of those require an emergency response from the police.

Calls to 999 should always be in the context of a real emergency such as when a crime is happening, when someone suspected of a crime is nearby or where someone is injured or in danger. All other matters such as reporting a less urgent crime or contacting police with a general enquiry should be made on the 101 number.

3. Update on Police and Crime Commissioners

Proposed changes to the police governance structure finally became a reality last month after the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill received Royal Assent, ending months of debate on the issue.

This means that by the end of next year police authorities will cease to exist and will instead be replaced by directly-elected Police and Crime Commissioners.

The Authority has welcomed the clarity this decision provides and is now working hard to prepare for the transition to the new arrangements.

Elections for the new PCCs have been put back to November 2012 to give everyone involved more time to get ready for the handover and make sure it is as smooth and seamless as possible. The extra time will also facilitate the publication of national guidance to assist us as we set up a framework for the new structure.

We like to reassure residents that we are working hard behind the scenes to safeguard recent improvements made in performance and public satisfaction rates. In our view, it is 'business as usual' as we continue to deliver our work across all areas of our responsibility to achieve the best possible outcome for our communities. We are committed to keeping the public fully informed of all developments relating to PCCs and will deliver this information in a timely manner so that our communities know exactly what is happening.

It is important that the PCC inherits a financially sound organisation, and over the next few months, we will press ahead with our pioneering collaboration programme to develop further value for money projects which will improve our ability to deal with serious and organised crime and make people safer.

The strong collaborative foundations that we have put down will continue to grow in the future and we take great pride to have played such a vital role in this.

4. Update on re-organisation

From this month, all the reorganisation work we have been busy working out over the past few months will start to take effect, bringing major changes across the force which will help it to run more efficiently while also saving money.

The changes mainly relate to the way we organise our staff and should not be noticeable to local residents. They are mainly concerned with making sure the Force utilises its resources in the most effective way possible and mobilises the right people at the right time.

The force will implement the three local policing districts, already widely publicised, this month, each of which will be led by their own Chief Inspector and linked to local authority areas. PCSOs will continue to provide a vital link with communities and deal with local issues and concerns, while more police officers will be available to respond to minor crime, anti-social behaviour and problem hotspots. Local policing will become a more prominent priority with extra resources to deal with the issues that matter most to the public.

The three Chief Inspectors for the districts have been named as:

1. Bedford - CI Rob McCaffery
2. Central Bedfordshire - CI Neil Waring
3. Luton - T/CI Rob Bartlett

To contact your local policing team [click here](#) and follow the links to your local authority area.

We will be able to give problems such as sustained anti-social behaviour a higher priority and any intelligence generated will be used to help the investigation process and prevent future offences.

Officers will be responsible for investigating low level crime affecting communities, targeting and disrupting prolific offenders living in neighbourhoods through early identification.

A new Response Policing Team (RPT) will attend incidents countywide, with new technology being deployed to help save money and speed up response times.

The response officers will respond 24-hours-a-day from bases in Bedford, Luton, Dunstable, Leighton Buzzard, Amptill and Biggleswade, and will usually be the first point of contact for the public in an emergency situation.

Plain clothes detectives will also cover the whole county, investigating and detecting more serious crimes.

The Force also aims to increase the number of incidents resolved on the telephone, which will reduce demand on frontline staff. As a result, it is improving the way the Control Room operates by introducing a new appointment system to resolve non-emergency issues. This enables police officers to meet victims and witnesses at times convenient to them.

The Police Authority has been keen to consult with the public and our partners throughout the reorganisation process which has guided many of our decisions. We are keen to continue that two-way communication in the

months ahead and will be asking residents at a later stage whether these changes are having any impact on the service they receive to ensure we continue to meet public expectations.

5. Integrated Offender Management

Can we draw your attention to the attachment in the email? This bulletin has been sent on behalf of the Integrated Offender Management Unit, which has been subject to significant investment by the Police Authority, to inform you about the joined up approach being adopted to prevent reoffending.

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.

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