



# PRESS INFORMATION

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## **Police Authority Scrutinises Initiatives to Tackle Serious Violent Crime**

Initiatives designed to tackle serious violence\* have been scrutinised by members of Bedfordshire Police Authority's Performance and Planning Committee.

A report presented by the Chief Constable, Gillian Parker, was examined in detail to establish the most effective methods of tackling serious violent crime.

Members voiced their concern that targets set by the Police Authority for the number of serious violence offences recorded and detected were being missed, and welcomed the fact that a dedicated Serious Violence Strategy was now being developed by Bedfordshire Police.

Acknowledging that alcohol is often a factor in violent crime, Members were keen to understand the resource implications should the current licensing laws be changed. Members felt that if the plans to banish the late night opening hours and reinstate traditional pub and club opening hours are introduced, valuable police resources will be saved. These resources could then be effectively redeployed in other areas dependent on need.

The demand for policing services due to the night time economy has been significantly helped by multi-agency initiatives. The SOS Bus in Luton, which is available in the Town Centre on Friday and Saturday nights, has helped to reduce the call on services for the Police and the Ambulance/Health services. In addition, Street Pastors in Dunstable, Leighton Buzzard and Bedford have provided a reassuring presence and helping hand for people needing assistance.

The report also highlighted the work to tackle serious sexual crimes such as rape with the introduction in 2009 of a dedicated Rape Investigation Unit, intended to improve the service provided to victims and ultimately increase the number of cases successfully brought to justice.

However, Members were disappointed to hear from the Chief Constable that the detection rate for serious sexual offences over the first three months of this year was only 16.5% - which both the Chief Constable and the Committee felt was unacceptable against a stretching target set by the Police Authority for the year of 27%. Mrs Parker emphasised that the number of detections for this type of crime can fluctuate appreciably over a few months and pointed out that the number of offences successfully brought to justice was at 34.4%, above the 32% annual target, thanks in no small part to the Rape Investigation Unit.

Chair of the Committee, Martin Partling, said: "Violence and fear of violence need to be addressed. This is a top priority for the Police Authority, and while we appreciate that the number of serious violent crimes committed is not high, we are disappointed that targets for reducing and detecting Most Serious Violence are being significantly missed at this point.

"However, the Force has a 100% success rate for the detection of murder over the last 11 years.

"The Force's plans for a new over-arching strategy were welcomed and Authority members have asked to be included in its development."

ENDS

**\*Definition of Most Serious Violence Offences**

- Murder
- Attempted Murder
- Manslaughter
- Infanticide
- Intentional Destruction of a Viable Unborn Child
- Causing Death By Dangerous Driving
- Causing Death by careless driving when under the influence of drink or drugs
- Causing Death by Careless or inconsiderate driving
- Wounding or carrying out an act endangering life
- Use of substance or object to endanger life
- Possession of items to endanger life
- Racially or religiously aggravated inflicting grievous bodily harm without intent
- Inflicting grievous bodily harm without intent
- Causing death by aggravated vehicle taking

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