

29 OCTOBER 2014

Police and Crime Panel

Police and Crime Plan 2013-2017

Report of the Durham Police and Crime Commissioner



Background

1. The Panel will recall that at their meeting on 3rd March 2014 they considered the draft of my refreshed Police and Crime Plan for 2014-2017. Support was given both to my personal priorities and to the community priorities along with the inclusion of mental health and integrated offender management as key areas.
2. Since the launch of my plan I have held regular monthly meetings with the Chief Constable and his Executive team, to hold him to account for the delivery of my policing priorities. I am looking to replace the current performance on a page document to strengthen the process by enabling me to present the key performance information along with context which will give added value to the data presented. The revision of the system will include updates for both this panel and for the public.

Current Position

3. I have not yet finalised the revisions to the accountability process. Therefore I have attached a working document (appendix A) to this report which is a hybrid document between the old style of Plan on a Page and the new style document which is being developed.
4. In addition to monitoring force performance I have also been working with a range of partners to take forward actions on all of my priorities and the following is a brief synopsis of current activity.

A Reducing the impact of domestic abuse, particularly violence against women and girls

- In February we held another successful Domestic Abuse Seminar in partnership with our constabulary colleagues and both the Darlington Community Safety Partnership and the Safe Durham Partnership.
- In November last year I launched the regional Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy along with my Northumbria and Cleveland counterparts. Moving forward we will be celebrating the 1st anniversary of the strategy in December. Further details of progress against the VAWG Strategy is being presented to panel members as a separate agenda item at this meeting.

- I have supported the 'Loves me, loves me not' campaign which was launched by the Soroptimists International of Darlington and District, and the 'Love is many things' campaign with partners. Both campaigns were about the ways of recognising the signs of unacceptable behaviour in a relationship, whether it straight, bisexual, lesbian or gay.
- We have been successful in securing external funding from the Ministry of Justices' competed fund for provision of victim services, including provision of a video link between the Court and the SARC (Sexual Assault Referral Centre) and for RSACC (Rape and Sexual Abuse Counselling Centre) for a Development Worker and Counsellors.

B Reducing the impact of hate crime

- To focus and coordinate approaches to tackle hate crime I have facilitated the development of a joint Hate Crime Group across County Durham and Darlington and they have now produced a joint Hate Crime Strategy and Action Plan.
- I hosted another successful Hate Crime Seminar in April which was very well attended, and received positive feedback. It showcased the Hate Crime Resource Pack, the Safe Places Scheme and the launch of Community Hands.
- I am working with my counterpart in Cleveland to undertake a piece of joint work to look at how the police and other criminal justice agencies deal with incidents of this nature and what actions could be taken to improve the victims journey through the criminal justice system.

C Improving engagement with local communities

- I am in the process of developing an extensive consultation as part of the refresh of the Police and Crime Plan for 2015-17. The consultation will seek the views of the public on my proposed objectives and plan for 2015 onwards.
- I formally met with my Community Panels in January this year with a view to meeting them again in the autumn, however to maximise resources this will be delayed until the end of the year to coincide with my public consultation on the refresh of my Police and Crime Plan for 2015-17.
- Throughout the year I have utilised a variety of engagement mechanisms ranging from newsletters, face to face meetings, social media and online forums.
- I have attended a wide range of community/public meetings and events, including the Your Police, Your Say meetings prior to Council meetings, street surgeries, MP surgeries, PACT (Police and Communities Together) meetings, Town and Parish meetings, Area Action Partnerships etc.

- I have attended meetings/ events across the county from St John's Chapel in the west, to Easington and Seaham in the east, to Hurworth and Barnard Castle in the South, to Stanley and Consett in the north. I have mapped all of my activity on a large map and In order to maximise coverage and exposure I am planning all of my future engagement activity and prioritising attendance at meetings in areas where I have not yet visited.
- I have met formally with the Voluntary and Community Sector to explain my role and how we can work together as we move forward in the future. I am planning a series of meetings with the sector to seek their views on my objectives and plan for 2015 onwards and to discuss my commissioning strategy and funding opportunities.
- I am strengthening links with young people and I am in the process of developing a Young Peoples Community Panel which will formally launch early in 2015. I have also taken part in a 'Question Time' event with young people and the Member of Youth Parliament in Darlington as part of Local Democracy Week.
- I am reassured that the Constabulary are striving to increase public confidence and they have introduced several new initiatives including 'opportunity knocks' and 'park, walk and talk' which sees officers actively engaging with the public.
- I have also fully supported the mutual gain projects which the constabulary have been working on throughout this year. The projects bring together the constabulary, key partners and most importantly the local community to work together and rebuild social capital and regain the community strength. I look forward to seeing how the lessons learnt from these projects are rolled out throughout the force area.

D Tackling anti social behaviour

- Overall anti-social behaviour figures are stabilising after a long-term downward trend.
- I have lead the consultation on Community Remedy which I am required to produce in accordance with the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill. Community Remedy provides an opportunity for victims to require the offender to do something to make up for their offending. I have agreed a list of community resolutions (actions) with the Chief Constable from which the victim can pick from. The consultation is now complete, briefing sessions have been delivered and it will available to victims from the 20th October 2014.

E Tackling harm caused to individuals and communities by alcohol and drugs

- I continue to support the call for minimum unit pricing as a tool to tackle the harm caused by alcohol.
- I have welcomed the introduction of Operation ARIES by the Constabulary and partners to address the issue of underage drinking across the county.

- Linked to the Alcohol agenda I endorse and appreciate the work which the Constabulary are developing with Durham University and partners to raise awareness of personal safety following the recent river death tragedies that we have experienced.
- I am talking to other regional PCCs regarding funding support to Balance North East. Members may be aware that Balance was launched in 2009 following commitments made in the Regional Health and Wellbeing Strategy, “Better Health, Fairer Health”. The organisation supports partners across the region by educating and informing stakeholders and the public of the impact of alcohol misuse and the best ways to tackle it, sharing best practice and lobbying for changes in legislation.
- I am a firm supporter of health-based recovery for people addicted to drugs. I feel that treating them as criminals is inhumane and counter-productive. Not only does the current UK drug policy isolate and persecute those with the illness of addiction, but it also creates a system where organised crime groups can make huge profits. Therefore I am pressing forward with my drive on the debate on the future of drug policy. In November 2014 I am hosting a drug symposium which will pull together key professionals and academics to debate this issue.
- I recognise that all drugs, including alcohol and tobacco, can be harmful. I am not calling for the full legalisation of controlled drugs; dealing drugs should still be illegal. Instead, I believe that personal possession should no longer be treated as a criminal offence. The harms of drugs are increased when addicts, who have a health problem, are treated as criminals, creating a cycle from which there is little chance of escape. We must continue to target organised crime groups, and criminal acts perpetrated by drug users. But by getting addicts into treatment and off drugs, thereby reducing demand, the fuel for organised crime groups will be cut off. The evidence of half a century of the war on drugs shows it has failed. The evidence of fresh approaches abroad and at home offers clear support to my views. But, above all, I want a sensible debate about the issues.

F. Improving Road Safety

- In order to address the concerns of residents in relation to speeding I have attended several community speedwatch operations and I have provided funding to each of the neighbourhood teams within the Constabulary for speed laser guns to ensure that concerns can be addressed swiftly.
- In response to concerns raised in a public meeting in Newton Aycliffe last year regarding parking issues outside of schools I have worked alongside the schools, Constabulary and other delivery partners and we held a very successful road safety action week, which proactively involved the school children. Due to the success of the action week, I am hoping to have similar initiatives rolled out across the force area which will be linked to national road safety week, later in year.

- Also in response to public concern and linked to road safety surrounding schools I have been liaising with Durham County Council in relation to the implementation of 20mph zones and limits.

G. Making police services visible and accessible at all times

- I remain fully committed to neighbourhood policing and plan to ensure that we remain visible within neighbourhoods. I am closely monitoring the impact of reducing officer numbers to ensure that this does not adversely impact upon visibility and accessibility.
 - I am fully supportive of the police in the promotion of the Special Constabulary and increasing the number of police volunteers.
 - I am seeking every opportunity to make savings in non-pay budget areas
5. I am also involved in a number of initiatives and links not directly identifiable with my policing priorities, including mental health, reducing reoffending, rural and wildlife crime, the transformation of rehabilitation agenda, stop and search, professional standards complaints and integrity monitoring and the collaboration agenda.
6. We have been successful with bids for a Victim Suite in south east Durham and for a project to look at the support for victims with mental health problems as part of the external funding secured from the Ministry of Justice Competed Fund.

Conclusion

6. I will endeavour to answer any questions members may have regarding progress in the achievement of my policing priorities.

Ron Hogg
Police and Crime Commissioner for Durham