

Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Panel

15th September 2023

COMMISSIONER'S UPDATE REPORT Safe, Resilient and Connected Communities

This is a report of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Alison Hernandez, drawing the Police and Crime Panel's attention to a number of matters that have arisen, or progress that has been made, since the last Panel meeting in July 2023.

1. Reopening Police Enquiry Offices



In July and August, I visited police stations in Looe, Honiton, Ilfracombe, Kingsbridge and Okehampton. Police Enquiry Offices (PEOs) at these locations will be reopened under the third phase of my programme to invest in front line contact within our communities. This project – code-named Operation Meloria - will also deliver a police enquiry office at Devonport Police Office in Plymouth for the first time and a front desk will be added to Exmouth Police Station, which is being rebuilt in a £5m project to give the town a public-facing station which is fit for 21st century policing. During my visits I met MPs, councillors, members of the local community and had a chance to tour the facilities and see how work to reintroduce the front desks was progressing. This third phase of the project represents an investment of £1.5m and will result in approximately 18 jobs for police enquiry officers being created around the force area.



The public enquiry office construction work at both Devonport and Looe police stations continues to proceed as per the planned programme with openings expected in September and October respectively. Contractors are already appointed for the next three stations - Okehampton, Kingsbridge and Ilfracombe, all due to be ready by the end of the calendar year with the final station being Honiton, which will open in early 2024.

In August, the Cornwall Council-owned Torpoint Police Station, which is scheduled for demolition later this year, was vacated and the officers relocated to a new premises further inland at Antony. This will provide greater accessibility to the Rame peninsula and provides excellent accommodation for police staff.

2. Reducing the risk posed by Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC)

Panel members will no doubt have read about the significant problems caused to public estates managers by the presence of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete in buildings. RAAC is a lightweight form of precast concrete, frequently used in public sector buildings in the UK from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s. It is less durable than traditional concrete and this can have significant safety consequences. I am pleased to be able to reassure the panel that my estates team conducted a comprehensive survey of the entire police estate (approximately 135 buildings) in 2019 after the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) issued a national warning around this construction method. RAAC was discovered in three buildings, a sports hall and swimming pool complex at Middlemoor police headquarters and Barnstaple Police Station. All have been - or are due to be - demolished. A decision was taken not to replace the swimming pool. I have replaced Barnstaple Police Station and will officially open a new sports hall tomorrow (September 16). I would like to use this opportunity to thank the then estates manager Laura Haynes, who has now moved on from the post, for her exemplary leadership in identifying this problem and finding solutions to it to prioritise the safety of officers, staff and the public.

3. Police Officer Pay Award

A 7% police officer pay award has been announced by the Government following the acceptance of the Police Remuneration Review Board (PRRB) recommendations. Along with prison officers this was the joint highest award announced. The Home Office announced that funding will be provided for the additional costs over and above 2.5% which is the average estimated nationally for pay awards. This additional funding is very welcome and ensures that this level of pay award can be funded without affecting the services provided by police officers.

The police staff pay award has yet to be announced but the additional funding announced by the Home Office includes the same additional funding for a police staff pay award of the same level.

4. Safer Streets – Round Five

On July 6, the Home Office announced its latest round of Safer Streets Funding. Round five, worth £43m, will run for 18 months from October 1, 2023 to March 31, 2025 with each police and crime commissioner provisionally being allocated up to £1m to develop their Safer Streets funding proposals. In addition, there is a mandatory 50% matched funding requirement.

The Safer Streets Round Five funding is aimed at significantly reducing levels of neighbourhood crime, Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) in

disproportionately and persistently affected areas of England and Wales, and to develop the evidence base to inform future investment and commissioning decisions.

Following an evidence-based assessment of data and local partnership intelligence and given that the Home Office recommendation was for commissioners to consider alternative hotspots which had not received previous Safer Streets funding, my team and I proposed Paignton and Camborne & Redruth (combined) as project locations.

My office immediately set up two partnership working groups, who met weekly over the summer to develop funding proposals for each geography. These proposals were submitted to the Home Office by the deadline of August 29.

For each project area the working groups identified up to seven interventions which will have the greatest impact on addressing the themes of the fund. Across both areas, interventions will include additional CCTV and improved street lighting, mobile police engagement vehicles, VAWG night-time economy police interventions, town centre ASB officers and additional youth outreach provision. The Home Office is due to confirm the funding awards in September and a verbal update, if available, will be provided to panel members at the meeting.

5. Operation Scorpion – rounds five and six



I am pleased to report that robust enforcement action to disrupt drugs supply continues to take place in partnership with other South West police forces and their respective commissioners under the 'Operation Scorpion' initiative. Phase five of this month-long operation targeted organised crime groups (OCGs) involved in cannabis cultivation. It led to 67 arrests, £6.5m worth of cannabis and a 9mm handgun being seized from locations across the region. The region's five police forces, supported by the South West Regional Organised Crime Unit (SWROCU) and independent charity Crimestoppers, carried out 58 warrants at commercial cannabis grows. The South West's results were part of a nationally coordinated operation to unearth and disrupt OCGs by taking out a key source of their revenue, while simultaneously apprehending many of those involved, safeguarding

those being exploited, and increasing intelligence around how the networks operate. Throughout the operation, Devon and Cornwall Police executed 20 warrants, seizing over 1,190 cannabis plants with an estimated street value of more than £675,000. Officers made a number of arrests during the warrants. On June 28 I attended a raid on a former nightclub in Torquay where drugs seized (pictured) had an estimated street value of up to £349,440. It was impressed upon me the vital role members of our communities have in providing intelligence to police about such operations. The sixth iteration of Operation Scorpion will take place from October 9 to 11, during the County Lines Week of Intensification. With Crimestoppers we are encouraging our communities to learn how to spot the signs of county lines drug dealing and pass intelligence to police as it is only with the support of our residents that we protect society's most vulnerable from the irreconcilable damage caused by drugs.

6. Rural crime to be the next regional priority

As Chairman of the South West Police Collaboration Board (SWPCB), I am pleased to announce that Rural Crime has been chosen as the next regional priority for the South West region. This follows on from the model of Operation Scorpion. Wiltshire Police and Crime Commissioner Philip Wilkinson is leading the scoping of this with Gloucestershire Chief Constable Rod Hansen. SWPCB members will be updated on the terms of reference at the October 19 meeting.

7. Chief officer group changes

I am pleased to be able to inform the panel that Assistant Chief Constable David Thorne was, on July 28, appointed as Temporary Deputy Chief Constable for Devon & Cornwall Police, filling the role vacated by A/CC Jim Colwell. T/DCC Thorne joined the force in 1999 and will be known to Plymouth councillors as a former Plymouth BCU Commander, in addition to his many criminal investigation roles with Devon & Cornwall Police. He left Devon and Cornwall to become Assistant Chief Constable with South Wales Police in 2020, returning in March this year as Assistant Chief Constable with responsibility for Crime and Criminal Justice. T/DCC Thorne has a wealth of experience gained during his 24 years of service. Chief Superintendent Steve Parker has been appointed as Temporary Assistant Chief Constable to lead Crime and Criminal Justice. T/ACC Parker has covered this area for a large part of the last two years and is greatly experienced in leading serious criminal enquiries. Temporary Chief Superintendent Sharon Donald has been appointed to the role of Head of Crime in T/ACC Parker's absence.

8. Customer contact

The correspondence which my office's customer contact team receives enables me to gain an understanding of the issues members of the public are concerned about. Since the last Police and Crime Panel, data from July 7 to August 25, shows that conduct, contact, road safety, antisocial behaviour, and service delays are themes which commonly arise within the customer contact arena.

I received 28 separate queries or concerns regarding officer conduct, most of which were sent to the Professional Standards Department as a complaint. Problems with contacting the force, such as calls to 101 and 999, resulted in my office receiving 26 queries or concerns regarding this topic. These mostly referenced the difficulties of the wait times.

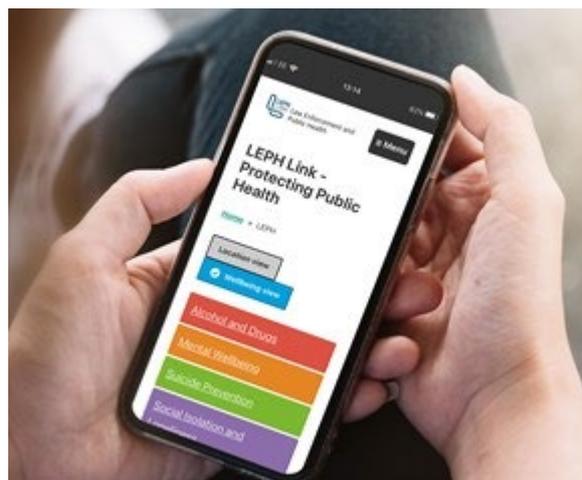
The topic of firearms generated 11 queries or concerns into my office, with most of the correspondence received referencing the delays that are experienced when applying for a licence, certificate or renewal. In terms of queries and concerns relating to Police and Crime Plan priorities, road safety generated 25, anti-social behaviour 21, violence four, and drugs six.

My team strives to resolve queries and concerns from the public at the first point of contact. By analysing the trends of topics which are generated by correspondence which enters my office, I remain committed to ensuring that my priorities are aligned with the views of the public and continue to scrutinise the force on areas which the public raise their concerns over.

9. Councillor advocates

Connecting communities is a key principle of my Police and Crime Plan and this scheme is an essential part of delivering on that principle, linking local authority members to their policing teams, the services I commission and our communities. The scheme has approximately 350 members from local authorities from all council tiers across Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. This year I am delivering a seminar on each of my strategic priorities. On July 17, around 60 councillors came together for an online seminar on the priority of road safety. Councillors were updated on innovative initiatives to tackle speeding drivers using drone technology, attempts to reduce a worrying rise in serious motorcycle incidents and the use of dashcam footage to identify dangerous drivers. For context, provisional data tells us there were 127 additional Op Snap submissions resulting in positive action in July of this year compared to January. On September 19, councillors will come together for a seminar to update them on progress at reducing violent crime.

10. Launch of the LEPH Link



It has been nearly a year since the Law Enforcement Public Health Link app (LEPH) - sponsored by the Serious Violence Prevention Programme - was first piloted in Plymouth. In that time, participating officers – from Neighbourhood and Pathfinder through to Investigation and Custody – have been trialling the new signposting tool and reporting back on their experiences. Since force-wide rollout back in May, it is worth reflecting on the pilot and sharing learnings, plus noting officers' feedback. I am delighted to report that the pilot saw almost 2,000 users and with 86% of surveyed officers saying they think it will save them time on the job, LEPH Link will bring greater efficiency and improved service to frontline policing.

In brief, the LEPH app is easily downloadable to officers' mobile devices, providing real-time access to a vast range of local and national support services at the point of need. It has proved particularly helpful for rapid signposting to local drug and alcohol support services, as well as mental health and suicide prevention (the top three most used categories) but also for domestic abuse, homelessness and rough sleeping services. As a custody officer commented, "I really like the fact that LEPH is broken into different need areas".

Using an evidence-based, public health model (developed by University of Leeds and endorsed by the National Police Chiefs' Council and the College of Policing), this is a progressive tool that is sponsored by the Serious Violence Prevention Programme and delivered in-force. Helpfully, it is based on the Making Every Contact Count model, that aims to:

- Allow rapid 'real time' signposting to a wide range of public health services in the community, meaning members of the public, especially the most vulnerable, can get vital help at the point of need.
- Make frontline policing quicker and easier, freeing up time and resources for other more complex work.
- Be easy to install on devices - no tricky tech barriers and simple to use in everyday policing.

The benefits are plain to see, both to people in need and more widely, to community safety. Many officers have stated that vulnerable people they have helped via LEPH have been really grateful, thanking them for quick and easy signposting to appropriate services. Feedback also shows that use of the new service helps reduce shame and stigma (e.g. with seeking help for addiction or rough sleeping) due to the ease of intervention.

Of course, the new LEPH Link app is not intended to replace existing safeguarding measures or investigation protocols. The app simply provides a reliable source of real-time, location-based information to help save officers time and support the public at the point of need. It is a real success story and an example of how innovation can benefit modern policing.

11. Victim Care Website advertising and promotion



The advertisement features a background image of hands clasped together. The main text reads: "Have you been affected by crime? Visit victimcare-dc.org". A central white box contains the text: "Help is available **even if you haven't reported to police.** Get access to 24-hour live chat and guidance to help you cope". Below this, it says "or call Victim Support 24/7 on 0808 1689111". Logos for VictimCare (Devon • Cornwall • IOS), VS VICTIM SUPPORT, and PCC are also present.

My new website to provide information to victims of crime about the services I commission to support them - victimcare-dc.org – has a simpler 'call to action' with just one set of contact details, for the Victim Support charity and 24/7 helpline, than the site it replaced. My communications and engagement team have embarked on a round of advertising and promotion to ensure that awareness of these services, and the site, is increased among residents of Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. This includes an advertising campaign which promotes the campaign on buses in the police force area (pictured). The services promoted are free at point of use and available to victims of crime whether or not these crimes have been reported to police.

12. Vision Zero South West Road Safety update

Commercial Vehicle operation

Commercial vehicles make up 13.5% of UK traffic, so it's vital these vehicles are in a safe and roadworthy condition. In July officers worked with the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency on an

operation targeting commercial vehicles on the M5 in Devon. Vehicles of all sizes – from 3.5 tonne vans to the largest HGVs – were taken to the weighbridge site at Sampford Peverell for inspection.

During the operation, 37 vehicles were stopped, with 60% having identified offences. Depending on the offence, some drivers were offered advice or roadside rectification, while more serious offences resulted in vehicle prohibitions and prosecution against drivers and operators.

Motorcyclist Behaviour Change campaign

As I have previously mentioned, 2022 was a truly tragic year for motorcyclists in Devon and Cornwall with a spike in deaths (16) and serious injuries (187). This resulted in the set-up of a Vision Zero South West multi-agency task group to address the issue. After months of research and work involving the Cabinet Office's Behavioural Science team and numerous local experts, we recently launched a campaign aimed directly at motorcyclists – featuring none other than TV presenter and motorcycle legend Henry Cole. We have already received great feedback on the video and it has attracted much press attention – you can see it yourself [here](#).

Community Speedwatch (CSW)

In October we are hosting our two annual CSW seminars which take place in both counties:

- Thursday, October 19 – Royal Cornwall Showground Pavilion, Wadebridge
- Monday, October 30 – Westpoint, Exeter

I look forward to seeing many of you there.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) speed cameras



We have deployed the UK's first free-standing AI road safety camera system which identifies mobile phone and seatbelt offences. The cameras are highly portable and will be sited in different locations across Devon and Cornwall. During the first 14 days of use on some of Devon and Cornwall's busiest roads the cameras captured an estimated 2,500 offences. A third of all fatal collisions in 2021 involved someone not wearing a seatbelt and so this new system is a vital tool in helping to bring down the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads.

13. Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB)

Victim Codes of Practice (VCoP)

I am pleased to share with you the work that I have commissioned in my capacity as Chair of the Local Criminal Justice Board in relation to scrutinising cases to ensure compliance with the VCoP across the whole of the criminal justice system. Devon and Cornwall is the first area to establish a full partner agency scrutiny panel which includes those agencies with statutory responsibilities; the Police, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), His Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS), His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) as well as our strategic delivery partners - Victim Support, the Witness Care Service and representatives from the Youth Justice Service (YJS) and Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) as appropriate. Panels are themed to review the victim's journey for specific crime types, however compliance is monitored across the 12 rights and entitlements detailed within the code to inform policies and working practices and identify and share good practice. The panel last met on July 25 and to review domestic abuse cases. There was positive engagement from all agencies which included representation from the force domestic abuse safeguarding lead.

Out of Court Disposals (OoCD)

The Local Criminal Justice Board also continues to oversee the scrutiny of Youth and Adult OoCD through the detailed examination of cases by panel members who represent key stakeholders across the Criminal Justice Partnership. Forthcoming panels include a review of OoCDs issued for sexual offences for youth cases on September 6 and stalking or harassment cases for the adult OoCD panel on September 14. I value the commitment and dedication from all the stakeholders involved in these panels, the findings of which inform the development of processes, training materials and cross agency working to improve standard as well as recognising dedicated and positive practice.

It is important that the public have confidence that Devon and Cornwall Police is using its powers legally, proportionately and consistently with policy and working practices with regard to OoCDs and that the Victims Code of Practice is complied with across the whole of the criminal justice partnership. It is also healthy for any organisation to pause and reflect on their practice and learn. These scrutiny panels meet three times a year focusing attention on areas of priority and publishing the findings and the police responses [here](#).

Youth Justice

I would also like to share with you the work of the 'Swift Youth Justice' task and finish group who are investing time to understand where there are delays in the system for youth cases. Case studies are being analysed to review the amount of time from arrest to conclusion across the whole criminal justice system. I recognise the importance of this work given the impact these delays have on young people, both suspects and victims. This subgroup will examine the reasons for delays, understand the challenges through engagement with key stakeholders and work together to develop creative solutions. They will report their findings and subsequent recommendations to the LCJB.

Maximising the dignity of women throughout the criminal justice system

I established this group at the start of 2023, chairing the first meeting to understand what the key issues are that women were experiencing throughout the criminal justice system. A particular focus is around the journey that women on remand experience when traveling from HMP Eastwood Park to courts in Devon and Cornwall for trial. This group has made great progress to document the

issues experienced by women including undertaking interviews with those who have lived experience. The group last met on June 15 and discussed gaps in service delivery, early interventions, community-based solutions and effective custody and support on release. I look forward to seeing how this group work together to identify new approaches which will improve the experience of women. Their progress will be presented to board members at the LCJB planning day on September 20.

The development of a victims & witness interactive multimedia resource

I am pleased to report that the LCJB is working closely with my communications and engagement team to develop an interactive multimedia resource which will provide victims and witnesses of crime an understanding of the route their journey will take dependent on the crime they have been connected with. I am grateful to criminal justice agencies who have provided resources to develop scripts, provide information and record their part of the journey. They each describe their areas of responsibility, the services they can offer and what they can expect from the initial point of reporting the crime, through to the conclusion of a case, including any after care or support that is available. I am confident that this resource will be an aid for increasing public understanding of the responsibilities of all agencies across the whole criminal justice partnership, but importantly will describe the journey within a single interactive resource rather than signposting those seeking information to different platforms.

14. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection reports

Following the tragic events in Keyham in August 2021, the Home Secretary and I requested that HMICFRS conduct a review of the progress that Devon and Cornwall Police has made in relation to recommendations issued by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) in its [Operation Begna report](#); and the comments made by Ian Arrow, Senior Coroner, in section three of his [Prevention of future deaths report](#). On July 28, HMICFRS published the findings of this review which found that the force has implemented four of the five IOPC recommendations and has made significant progress in relation to almost all of the comments made by the coroner. HMICFRS is satisfied that the force is entering into constructive dialogue with the IOPC on the remaining recommendation.

Nevertheless, HMICFRS states that the force's backlog of licences and renewals remains substantial, and its reliance on the issuing of temporary permits is high, and that this is an inappropriate and inefficient way of trying to manage demand. The Chief Constable and his team have developed a strategic plan to begin to significantly reduce the backlog and clear this completely by December 2024. I am supportive of the Chief Constable's approach and will be monitoring the force's progress against this December 2024 target.

HMICFRS has not made further recommendations to the Chief Constable at this stage but its report highlights further areas that the force will need to develop including a performance framework in the Firearms and Explosives Licencing Unit (FELU), consistent use of the decision-making risk matrix, formalisation of the dip sampling policy and some further improvements to training (while recognising that progress in this area has been generally good).

HMICFRS also published two national thematic inspection reports in July. The first, 'Police Performance: Getting a Grip', highlighted problems with the way that police forces understand and manage their own performance, meaning they do not know what issues are most important to tackle and where and how they can improve. The second, 'An inspection of how effective police forces are in the deployment of firearms', found that while overall there are good selection processes for firearms officers, and officers are well-trained and well-equipped, improvements need to be made

in the selection and training of strategic and tactical firearms commanders who manage a high degree of risk.

These reports can be all viewed in full on the [HMICFRS website](#). My formal response to each of these reports will be published over the next two months on my own [website](#).

15. Annual report

The 2022-23 annual report presented to the July 28 meeting of the Police and Crime Panel has been published on my [website](#) and in print. This publication fulfils my statutory obligation to provide such a document, aids public understanding of the force's strategic direction and provides transparency over how the force's budget for the year was raised and spent.

16. Middlemoor Police and OPCC Headquarters Refurbishment

At Devon and Cornwall Police's Middlemoor headquarters, a programme of refurbishment has now been completed, enabling our much-utilised Occupational Health staff to be relocated into new fit for purpose accommodation. This is an important strategic step forward because it will allow the subsequent demolition of a building, known as 'Cornwall House', later on this calendar year, which is the remaining building located within an area previously earmarked for land disposal on the open market.

Furthermore, a refurbishment of the office occupied by my staff and our partners at Andy Hocking House will commence this month and is expected to be completed in November.



Alison Hernandez

Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly

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