

## **Plymouth City Council**

**Subject:** Serious Acquisitive Crime Figures  
**Committee:** Customers and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel  
**Date:** 24 October 2011  
**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Jordan  
**CMT Member:** Director for Community Services  
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**Ref:** SH/C&COSP/Oct 11  
**Key Decision:** No  
**Part:** 1

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### **Executive Summary:**

At its last meeting held on 12 September 2011, the Customer and Communities Scrutiny Panel requested a report on crime figures for this meeting, having noted that burglary was up. The panel also requested neighbourhood specific information.

Home Office figures released in January 2011 showed Devon and Cornwall as the third safest force area in England and Wales, showing 53 crimes per 1000 population, compared to 76 nationally.

Whilst crimes of 'assault with injury' and 'criminal damage' (which are city indicators and targets) are reducing and are virtually on target, recently serious acquisitive crime has shown an increase – which is the focus of this report.

This report lists the activities and interventions that are in place to specifically address serious acquisitive crime, in particular dwelling burglary and theft from motor vehicles.

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### **Corporate Plan 2011 – 2014:**

City Priority – Reduce Inequalities.

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### **Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications: Including finance, human, IT and land**

None.

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### **Other Implications: e.g. Community Safety, Health and Safety, Risk Management and Equality, Diversity and Community Cohesion:**

Key community safety issues are discussed.

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### **Recommendations and Reasons for recommended action:**

This report is for information.

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**Alternative options considered and reasons for recommended action:**

N/A

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**Background papers:**

None.

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**Sign off:**

Fin		Leg		HR		Corp Prop		IT		Strat Proc	
Originating SMT Member: Peter Aley											

## 1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 At its last meeting held on 12 September 2011, the Customer and Communities Scrutiny Panel requested a report on crime figures for this meeting, having noted that burglary was up. The panel also requested neighbourhood specific information.

1.2 Home Office figures released in January 2011<sup>1</sup> showed Devon and Cornwall as the third safest force area in England and Wales, showing 53 crimes per 1000 population, compared to 76 nationally. Similarly, over a 12 month period up to the end of August 2011 Plymouth continues to hold a steady position of being ranked fourth best (of 15) in its family group of similar cities (iQuanta) for 'All Crime'.

1.3 Between 1 April and week ending 18 September 2011 levels of overall crime in Plymouth have increased by 2.4% (+234 crimes) compared to the same period the year before, which is largely attributed to the increases in levels of 'serious acquisitive crime', especially levels of burglary dwelling and theft from motor vehicle. At the end of August there has been an increase within priority neighbourhoods of 71 recorded crimes, and a citywide increase of 114 crimes. Currently five priority neighbourhoods have recorded an increase in overall crime; these are Mutley/ Greenbank, Whitleigh, East End, Devonport and Morice Town.

1.4 It should be noted that levels of crime are very fluid and sometimes subject to seasonal increases/decreases, and a number of crimes can often be down to one or two known, targeted, prolific offenders. Therefore, this report should be viewed as a 'snapshot' at the time of writing it. A verbal update will be provided at the Customer and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel of any updates or significant changes.

1.5 Of the indicators the city has set for tackling crime (see 2.1), three out of the four are reducing and are virtually on target, so the focus of this report will be on serious acquisitive crime which is currently not on target. Work is under way to address this, and those activities are covered in this report.

1.6 By way of an example of a target that is reducing/virtually on target - 'assault with injury' - at the end of week ending 18th September levels of violence with injury have reduced by 2.4% (-30). Levels of violence that fall beneath the threshold of violence with injury (e.g. common assault) have also reduced meaning total violence has fallen significantly. (9.9% and 296 fewer crimes at end of w/ending 18th Sept). In general across the city levels of violence with injury remain static or have reduced when compared to 2010/11, however Mutley and Greenbank neighbourhood is a concern, as the only neighbourhood to have recorded significant increase in crime levels.

1.7 A further example of a target that is reducing - 'reduce the rate in criminal damage' - at the end of week ending 18 September levels of criminal damage have reduced by 1.2% (-23).

## 2.0 TARGETS

2.1 As a reminder, the indicators and targets that have been set specifically to tackle crime are:

Level 2 indicator and target:

**Closing the gap in overall crime rate between priority neighbourhoods<sup>2</sup> and the City average.** The target is to reduce the gap by 4% which equates to a reduction of approximately 300 crimes across the priority areas in year one.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://neighbourhoodpolicing.devon-cornwall.police.uk/BCU-1663/Sector-1772/NB-1773/Pages/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=18>

<sup>2</sup> Stonehouse, City Centre, Honicknowle, Devonport, Whitleigh, Morice Town, East End, Mutley & Greenbank, Barne Barton, North Prospect.

Level 3 Indicators and targets :

**Reduce the rate in Serious Acquisitive Crime.** Target to reduce the rate per 1000 population by 2% from the 2010/11 baseline.

**Reduce the rate in Assault with Injury.** Target to reduce the rate per 1000 population by 2% from the 2010/11 baseline.

**Reduce the rate in Criminal Damage.** Target to reduce the rate per 1000 population by 4% from the 2010/11 baseline.

### 3.0 WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT SERIOUS ACQUISITIVE CRIME

3.1 Between 1 April and week ending 18 September 2011 levels of serious acquisitive<sup>3</sup> crime have risen by 16% (188 more offences) than for the same period the year before. Over a 12 month period up to the end of August 2011 Plymouth was ranked first (best of 15) in its family group of similar cities for 'Serious Acquisitive Crime'. However, over a three month period up to end of August 2011 we have slipped to third. In the main, the increases are attributed to two main crime types which are dwelling burglary and theft from motor vehicle. Numbers of burglary in dwelling have risen by 19% (+85) and theft from a vehicle by 19.7% (+90). The Police have commissioned a Problem Profile into all serious acquisitive crime which when complete will help fill some gaps in our understanding of this recent increase, and in particular the types of offender.

3.2 Over a 12 month period up to the end of August 2011 Plymouth was ranked first best (of 15) in its family group of similar cities for levels of dwelling burglary. However, over a 3 month period up to end of August we were ranked 4th. With regards dwelling burglary, the biggest increases are in Mutley/Greenbank (+38), Stonehouse (+15) and the East End (+13) areas, which are all neighbourhoods that fall within South and Central local policing area. Currently the intelligence regarding the offenders is somewhat limited, and therefore the rise cannot at this stage be necessarily attributed to known prolific offenders or those offenders currently supported through the Integrated Offender Management programme.

3.2 The type of burglary currently being committed matches previous historical trends with volume offences, particularly in Mutley/Greenbank, which are mainly break-ins into insecure premises, and are likely to be committed by opportunist thieves. This recent rise in domestic burglary in the Mutley/Greenbank area has occurred whilst students have been on their summer break.

3.3 We know that burglary tends to be committed by offenders to fuel drug habits. Plymouth City Council invests through the Community Safety Partnership a considerable sum into a drug treatment contract with Public Health to particularly target known offenders with drug habits and ensure they are fast-tracked into drug treatment. At the time of writing this report, there is no waiting list for drug treatment.

3.4 With regards the crime of theft from motor vehicle, over a 12 month period up to the end of August 2011 Plymouth was ranked fourth best (of 15) in its family group of similar cities. Over a three month period up to the end of August we have remained steady, ranked fourth. We know that the increase is spread wider across the city, with the biggest increases being recorded in northern areas of the city, although Stonehouse, City Centre and Mutley/ Greenbank (in South/Central) neighbourhoods remain the areas recording highest actual crime numbers.

3.5 Some theft from motor vehicle has included theft of metal objects (eg from vans) being stolen, but the Problem Profile will help us understand this better. These are opportunist 'smash and grab' offences and the most targeted individual item stolen continues to be Sat Navs. It appears offenders are a mixture of prolific offenders, but also those with lower level offending history.

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<sup>3</sup> Domestic Burglary, Theft of/unauthorised taking of Motor Vehicle, Theft From Motor Vehicle, Personal Robbery, Business Robbery, Aggravated Domestic Burglary, Aggravated Theft of Motor Vehicle.

3.6 As at end of August 2011, we are second best in our most similar family group For Theft of motor vehicle and also for robbery. Levels of theft of vehicle remain steady; so far this year recorded a slight fall in the number of offences. Levels of robbery have increased slightly but this equates to very small numbers, but we continue to monitor these closely and take necessary action when appropriate.

## 4.0 WHAT WE ARE DOING

4.1 A great deal of work is already under way, or is about to commence, to address the increases in serious acquisitive crime, including the following:

- Community Focus Week – w/c 26 September in Mutley/Greenbank – which has led to arrests of offenders for vehicle crime and burglary, some of whom were known targets. Together, Students, Fire Service, Trading Standards and Police visited a mix of 2,200 student/non-student homes, raising awareness of, and providing preventative advice on home security and community safety.
- We have set up Serious Acquisitive Crime Task & Finish Group, chaired by Plymouth City Council.
- The Safe and Strong Theme Group have agreed to look at the wider issues of the Mutley/Greenbank area.
- The Police and Community Safety Team have delivered a targeted safety and crime awareness raising campaign at the University's and Marjons 'Welcome Week' for students.
- Police are running an operation to deal with metal theft with British Transport Police.
- The Police are preparing a Problem Profile on the hotspot areas for domestic burglary which will help further identify and target offenders and determine times for additional patrols and interventions.
- The Police and Integrated Offender Management Scheme will be looking to link offending trends with current prolific offenders and targeting them and their offending activity.
- We are doing further work with University and Marjons volunteers and Student Presidents who are working with the Police to target hotspot areas, in particular where there are houses in multiple occupation, to raise awareness of home security.
- We have set up a "Student Watch Campaign" which will enable students to identify and report crime within the student population and increase intelligence.
- The Police are continuing with a programme of Operation Vocal (overt engagement campaign) with an emphasis in the south central policing area, which is a proactive and direct engagement within the community to raise awareness of community safety issues and provides advice on crime prevention – particularly burglary and vehicle crime.
- Plymouth University is supporting the Police and partners with interventions to engage students in the local community by funding three 'nights of action' over the remainder of the academic year, involving engagement with students on a range of crime issues and offering preventative advice.
- The University and Marjons have set up a 'Student Steering Group' which looks at addressing both the perceived impact of students in the City but also focuses on aspects of their safety and the positive contributions they make to the city.
- The police are also running a number of 'covert' operations and activities.

Recommendation:

- That Customer and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel note this report.