Wiltshire Police and Crime Panel

11 June 2014

Final Report of the Volunteers and Special Constables Task Group

Purpose

1. To present the conclusions and recommendations of the Volunteers and Special Constables Task Group.

Background

2. On 5 November 2013 the Panel discussed its approach to scrutinising the Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) delivery of his [Police and Crime Plan](link) (the Plan). The Panel decided to identify an area of interest to the public and establish a task group with a focus on supporting the Commissioner and building an effective working relationship. The Panel noted that the Plan is underpinned by a commitment to work with communities to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour (Chapters 5 and 7). A crucial part of this is the recruitment of special constables and volunteers (through the various 'Watch' Schemes and Neighbourhood Justice Panels). Relevant aspirations and initiatives in the Police and Crime Plan 2013-17 are:

   • "To encourage and foster greater levels of volunteering in the policing and crime arena.

   • To see all Wiltshire Community Area Boards and Swindon Localities adopting an Asset Based Community Development approach and playing a significant role in enhancing community safety within their areas through initiatives such as Neighbourhood Watch, Street Watch, Farm Watch, Community Speed Watch and Neighbourhood Justice Panels.

   • To make Neighbourhood, Farm and other community 'Watch' schemes fundamental to intelligence gathering and crime prevention in at least 80 percent of Wiltshire and Swindon communities.

   • To achieve community safety volunteering levels equivalent to one per cent of the Wiltshire and Swindon population regularly taking part in Neighbourhood

Watch, Street Watch, Community Speed Watch and other such 'Watch' schemes.

- To have a minimum of 300 active Special Constables across Wiltshire and Swindon, each attached to communities and contributing an average of at least 16 hours per month.

- To stimulate our communities to help themselves more by giving them the support and confidence to trial initiatives that add most value to them."

- My vision of the future is one where community policing resources become an integral part of broader community problem solving and support teams, working with communities to address the issues that most effect them."

3. The review therefore presented an opportunity for the Police and Crime Panel (PCP) to support the Commissioner in his delivery of the Plan and became the first area to be reviewed by a dedicated task group.

Methodology

4. The Task Group met four times between November 2013 and April 2014 and comprised the following membership:

   Cllr Glenis Ansell – Wiltshire Council
   Cllr Andrew Bennett – Swindon Borough Council
   Cllr Richard Britton – Wiltshire Council
   Mr Malcolm Grubb (Chairman) – Independent co-opted member
   Cllr Peter Hutton – Wiltshire Council

5. The Task Group met with, or considered written evidence from, the following witnesses:

   - Angus Macpherson, Wiltshire Police and Crime Commissioner
   - Kieran Kilgallen, Chief Executive, Wiltshire OPCC
   - Patrick Geenty, Chief Constable, Wiltshire Police
   - Sarah Kyte, Business Manager, Wiltshire OPCC
   - Richard Palusinski, Head of Wiltshire Special Constabulary
   - Paul Mills, Project Manager for Community SpeedWatch and Neighbourhood Watch, Wiltshire Council
   - Leicestershire Police

Preamble

6. The Task Group's review focused on two key themes:

    1. Special Constables
    2. Community Safety Volunteers and 'Watch' schemes.

    The task group had also intended to investigate three further areas: 1. How volunteers should be supported by the force, 2. How more volunteers could be enlisted, and 3. What scope there is for the force to use volunteers in performing 'back office' functions. However, there was not time to consider these topics within the timeframe of the review. The objectives set out below were agreed at the task group's initial scoping meeting.

7. The task group wishes to emphasise that its findings and recommendations were agreed and are presented with the intention of supporting the Commissioner in the successful delivery of his Police and Crime Plan 2013-17. We are 18 months into the Plan's four year scope, and although some of the findings represent areas of concern, they are included to highlight potential risks to the Plan's delivery so that these can be mitigated through appropriate action. In summary, the report has been written in the task group's role as a 'critical friend' and it is hoped that it will be considered and responded to in this spirit.

Evidence

Special Constables (SCs)

> **Task Group objective 1:** Assess the PCC's progress in delivering a minimum of 300 active Special Constables across Wiltshire and Swindon by 2017.

8. There are currently 208 Special Constables in Wiltshire although only 86 are qualified for independent patrol. This represents a huge increase from the 28 Special Constables recorded as active in 2009.

9. Figures seen by the task group and comments made by witnesses interviewed suggest that the aspired figure of 300 is unlikely to be attained and indeed may not be the appropriate number for the force area. The task group was not made aware of any recruitment or retention strategy in place for Special Constables.

> **Task Group objective 2:** Consider the impact on the overall delivery of the Plan of any failure to enlist and train sufficient numbers of operationally independent special constables

10. The Police and Crime Plan aspires to having "Special Constables across Wiltshire and Swindon…attached to communities". From this wording, the task group expected Special Constables to play an active role in neighbourhood policing, however, the Chief Constable reported to the task group that he has not decided what role he expects Special Constables to play. Without a detailed role description for Special Constables, defining how they will contribute to the Plan's delivery, it is not possible to assess the potential impact of not being able to enlist Special Constables in sufficient numbers.

11. The task group received figures estimating that Special Constables cost only £3.00 per hour to deploy. Furthermore, a 2010 report from the NPIA comments:

"The Special Constabulary's contribution to policing is immense, and time and time again these unique volunteers illustrate high levels of dedication and professionalism…by using targeted recruitment material, forces can maximise the opportunities to attract suitable candidates...In addition to this, there is a need to make sure forces are valuing their special constables, not only in terms of recognising the fantastic commitment that they give to their force, but also to the communities they serve." (Special Constabulary Recruitment Marketing and Retention Surveys – Report of Findings – July 2010)

Task Group objective 3: Analyse current arrangements for enlisting, funding, managing and training Special Constables, benchmark these against similar areas and make constructive recommendations for improvements

12. Analysing arrangements for enlisting, funding, managing and training Special Constables has proved difficult due to the lack of written information. The task group is aware that a report is being written on the Special Constabulary and would be keen to have sight of it once it is released.

13. Arrangements for planning, funding and delivering training for Special Constables appears to be undertaken in an ad hoc manner and is not integrated with training arrangements within the regular force. The Chief Constable reported to the task group his aspiration that Special Constables become fully integrated with the Regulars, but the task group is not aware of operational activity to achieve this.

14. Other Police forces, notably Kent, have made excellent progress in ensuring that Special Constables play an important role in community policing. They ensure good liaison between Regulars and Specials across their three operating divisions and Kent's Commissioner has funded three full-time tutor posts for twelve months to work exclusively with Special Constables. Recruitment and training programmes have been reviewed and refocused and strong emphasis has been placed on recognising and rewarding Special Constables' contribution.

Volunteering

Task Group objective 4: Evaluate progress towards the achievement of the PCC's target of increasing community safety volunteering to the equivalent of 1 percent of the force area population

15. One percent of the Wiltshire force area (which includes Swindon) is 6,800 people. There is a specific difficulty assessing Neighbourhood Watch Schemes' contribution to the total number of volunteers due to the unavailability of accurate figures. While there are 2,750 Neighbourhood Watch schemes listed on the system currently used by Wiltshire Police, its limitations mean it is not possible to tell how many of these schemes are active (and this limitation has been acknowledged by the Commissioner).

Task Group objective 5: Consider ways in which the PCC could enlist more volunteers by understanding what motivates volunteers and identifying any barriers which inhibit volunteering, and

Task Group objective 7: Consider how volunteers will need to be supported by the force in order to make this contribution

16. The task group has received a draft version of Wiltshire Police's Volunteer Strategy, which contains 8 aims for using volunteers to help deliver the overall Police and Crime Plan. However, "increasing the number of people volunteering with the Police and the range of activities they undertake" is the only aim without defined actions describing how it will be achieved.

17. The task group is aware of the proposed appointment of a Volunteer Coordinator tasked "to encourage, signpost and support volunteers". We understand that the job description for this role is currently being considered by the two local authorities. It was originally expected before Christmas 2013, but is currently outstanding and therefore the task group cannot comment on the role's likely effectiveness in delivering the Commissioner's plan.

18. The task group is aware of the increasing role of volunteers in delivering public services of all kinds. Local authorities are making increasing use of volunteers and in Wiltshire services such as libraries have been devolved to be delivered at community level. Wiltshire Council and Wiltshire Police are collaborating significantly in terms of ICT infrastructure and buildings, but the task group was not made aware of joint working and information sharing taking place as yet in terms of the recruitment and deployment of volunteers. The task group would appreciate clarification on whether the Volunteer Coordinator post (see

paragraph 17) is a joint appointment of the Police and Wiltshire Council and is therefore an example of collaboration in this area.

19. The Volunteer Centre Wiltshire provides advice and guidance to organisations looking to enhance their use of volunteers. The Centre has also developed a Wiltshire's Valuing Volunteering Promise; a commitment to ensuring that volunteering in Wiltshire is an inclusive activity that is open, accessible and rewarding for anyone who wishes to get involved. The Promise confirms the commitment of its signatories to the principles of Choice, Inclusion, Support, Safety, Reimbursement and Reward.

20. By adopting time credit schemes employers can encourage employees to get involved in volunteering and also improve the retention of its existing volunteers. Local community organisations issue credits to individuals who give their time to support them, and the individuals can then spend their credit on an hour's worth of activity in the local area. Large local companies also often have dedicated volunteering programmes. Large numbers of police officers already perform valuable voluntary roles outside of their paid hours, such as supporting schemes for young people like Bluz 'N' Zuz.

Neighbourhood Watch (NW) (including Neighbourhood Alert (NA))

Task Group objective 6: Identify the contribution the PCC expects Neighbourhood and other Watch schemes to make to the delivery of specific aspects of the Plan

21. The Police and Crime Plan aspires to "make Neighbourhood, Farm and other community 'Watch' schemes fundamental to intelligence gathering and crime prevention in at least 80% of Wiltshire and Swindon communities." Having investigated various replacement options for the current Neighbourhood Watch system, an off-the-shelf system called Neighbourhood Alert was selected. This is an online, secure community messaging system that allows authorised administrators to send and receive messages to and from registered people in the community and members of Neighbourhood Watch and other watch schemes. It can convey many types of message, such as messages about community events or CCTV images for "Have you seen this person?" alerts. The use of a common system provides the opportunity for the various Watch schemes to be more closely integrated and become, for example, Alderbury Watch or Chippenham Watch. There are also ambitions to extend it to other agencies such as the Environment Agency and Trading Standards, and local bodies such as or doctors' surgeries.

22. Neighbourhood Alert was chosen because,

- Of its impressive support system;
- It is used by neighbouring police forces – including Thames Valley and Hampshire are strongly considering it;
- It is compatible with Wiltshire Police's MOSAIC system.

23. A police working group has been set-up to manage Neighbourhood Alert's implementation and a business case is being prepared with a view to launching four pilot schemes in May 2014 followed by full roll-out in August 2014. The project is to be driven by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner's (OPCC) communications team and we understand that two additional staff are being recruited. We understand that an indicative figure of £75,000k has been allocated in the OPCC's 2014/15 budget. While the system will be funded through the OPCC, the current intention is that it will be owned and managed solely by Neighbourhood Watch and constabulary support will be removed once it is up-and-running.

24. The task group's review of different Neighbourhood Alert sites (Cumbria, Thames Valley and Leicestershire) indicates a variety of approaches to using the system:

- Thames Valley's Neighbourhood Alert site makes a clear connection between the Police and Neighbourhood Watch and their system is clearly focused on police and crime matters.
- Cumbria Police's site is oriented toward general community issues, with policing and crime hardly evident on the main page.
- Leicester's strategy was to use the system purely as a corporate communications tool, and they did not initially involve Neighbourhood Watch or their community policing units in its implementation. However, they now recognise that this needs to be corrected if the system's full potential is to be realised and are considering how this can be achieved.

Conclusions

Special Constables

25. It is the task group's view (and indeed that of other police forces) that Special Constables represent good value for money and can play a valuable role in neighbourhood policing. It therefore supports the Commissioner's intention to have them attached to communities.

26. To ensure that the Special Constabulary can contribute fully to the delivery of the Police and Crime Plan 2013-17, it will be important that a clear and agreed vision is in place defining…

a) what role Special Constables are to play in the achievement of the Plan's objectives;

b) the number of Special Constables to be recruited and how this will be achieved;

c) how Special Constables will be trained and whether such arrangements will, where appropriate, be integrated with training arrangements for the regular Police force;

d) how the contribution of Special Constables may be appropriately recognised and rewarded.

Volunteering

27. The task group fully supports the Commissioner's commitment to encouraging and fostering greater levels of volunteering in the police and crime arena to aid the delivery of the Police and Crime Plan 2013-17. To ensure that this is achieved and volunteers can contribute fully to the delivery of the Police and Crime Plan 2013-17, it is important that the following are in place:

a) A volunteer strategy and implementation plan describing how the aspiration to increase "the number of people volunteering with the Police and the range of activities they undertake" will be achieved;

b) A clear definition of how the proposed Volunteer Coordinator role will "encourage, signpost and support volunteers";

c) A commitment to investigating and benefiting from the available experience and expertise amongst public organisations in recruiting, retaining, training, supervising and deploying volunteers. This could include the following:

   i. Building on the significant collaboration already taking place between Wiltshire Police and Wiltshire Council, to include the sharing of knowledge and resources regarding the recruitment and deployment of volunteers.
   ii. Approaching the Volunteer Centre Wiltshire to provide advice and guidance to enhance the Police's use of volunteers.
   iii. Demonstrating a commitment to the principles of Choice, Inclusion, Support, Safety, Reimbursement and Reward in the Police's use of volunteers, by signing the Wiltshire Valuing Volunteering Promise.

d) The task group applauds the large numbers of police officers who also perform valuable voluntary roles outside of their paid hours. To support this further, Wiltshire Police might consider joining an employee time credits scheme or

tapping into the volunteering programmes of other major local employers, which may be helpful in recruiting Special Constables.

<u>Neighbourhood Watch (including Neighbourhood Alert)</u>

28. The task group is impressed by the power and scope of the Neighbourhood Alert system and believes it has potential to be a vital intelligence-gathering and dissemination mechanism for the police at a community level. To ensure that this is achieved and the system can contribute fully to the delivery of the Police and Crime Plan 2013-17, it will be important to ensure that the following are in place:

a) Given the variety of ways in which Neighbourhood Alert can be used, a clear and agreed statement defining Wiltshire's vision for its use of the system. The task group would like to see it implemented and used with crime reduction as its primary purpose and not diluted to become a general community communications platform;

b) Operational commitment from the Police, particularly at Neighbourhood Police Team (NPT) level, to 'driving' the system, in terms of a) inputting alerts and requests for information, encouraging the public to use the system and making general announcements about local police activity; and b) interrogating the system for public inputs about sightings, experiences, general observations and concerns. Purchasing and launching Neighbourhood Alert represents a small part of the effort required to get it established and widely used as a routine part of police communications.

c) A commitment to the promotion of Neighbourhood Alert within communities in order to benefit from existing commitment to community crime reduction (e.g. existing members of Neighbourhood and other 'watch' schemes), and to broaden community participation in crime reduction by providing an easy-to-use online platform that reflects people's increasing use of social media tools.

d) The task group is concerned that the Neighbourhood Watch organisation will not have the capacity to manage Neighbourhood Alert once constabulary support is removed. The success of the Community Speed Watch initiative in Wiltshire demonstrates how effective community-based schemes can be if they are implemented thoughtfully and given the appropriate resources.

Recommendations

To further the ambitions for Special Constables and Volunteers described in the Police and Crime Plan, the Task Group recommends that the Commissioner

1. **Clearly defines how Special Constables will be attached to communities;** (see paragraphs 10 and 25).

2. **In light of Recommendation 1, agrees an appropriate number of Special Constables and develops a strategy and implementation plan for the recruitment, retention and training of Special Constables;** (see paragraphs 9 and 26)

3. **Uses available national guidance and the experience of the Kent constabulary to explore opportunities for achieving best practice in the recruitment, training and deployment of Special Constables;** (see paragraphs 14)

4. **Considers**
   a) **using the Volunteer Centre Wiltshire to help develop and enhance the constabulary's use of volunteers;** (see paragraphs 19 and 27c)
   b) **signing up to the Valuing Volunteering Promise to demonstrate the Wiltshire Police's commitment to the principles of Choice, Inclusion, Support, Safety, Reimbursement and Reward when using volunteers;** (see paragraphs 19 and 27c)
   c) **introducing a time credits scheme to build on the valuable contribution already made by many Police officers who take part in unpaid voluntary work; and** (see paragraphs 20 and 27d)
   d) **introducing a scheme to encourage employers to support and promote the recruitment of Police and community safety volunteers from within their workforces.** (see paragraphs 20 and 27d)

5. **Confirms that Neighbourhood Alert will**
   a) **be implemented with crime-reduction as its central purpose;** (see paragraph 24 and 28a)
   b) **be used to reinvigorate the Neighbourhood Watch schemes across Wiltshire and Swindon;** (see paragraphs 21 and 28)
   c) **coordinate the growing number of different 'watch' schemes;** (see paragraphs 21 and 28)

6. **Acknowledges that achieving Neighbourhood Alert's full potential as a crime-reduction tool will require active and ongoing commitment from Neighbourhood Police Teams and defines how this will be achieved** (see paragraphs 23 and 28)

7. **Defines what criteria he will use to monitor and assess Neighbourhood Alert's effectiveness.**

We look forward to receiving the Commissioner's written response to the various issues raised in our report and would welcome any suggestions he may have regarding further work the Police and Crime Panel could do to help take these recommendations forward.

**Volunteers and Special Constables Task Group,
Wiltshire Police and Crime Panel**

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Appendices

None