

POLICE AND CRIME PANEL
18th June 2015

THE ROLE OF VOLUNTEERS AND SPECIAL CONSTABLES IN THE PCCs

POLICE AND CRIME PLAN

FOLLOW-UP REVIEW OF THE PCP'S RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

In June 2014 the PCP's Task Group on Volunteers and Special Constables submitted its final report to the PCC. It contained 7 key recommendations to which the PCC responded on 4th September 2014.

The PCP now wished to ascertain the status of those recommendations in terms of implementation and would be grateful if the Commissioner would provide answers to the following questions.

QUESTIONS

1 Clearly define how Special Constables will be attached to communities.

In his response the Commissioner explained the model of the employment of Specials which had been used in Trowbridge and told the PCP that this model was to be rolled out across the County.

Please could the Commissioner confirm that the Chief Constable agrees this model as being the one to be rolled out across the County and Swindon?

The Chief Constable agrees this model as being the one to be rolled out across the County and Swindon and is now in place. The model is one where the Special Constables and Special Sergeants are aligned to specific NPT areas. This gives each NPT a team of Special Constables and a Special Sergeant to rely on. The communication is improved as there is not regular change on which Specials may be in a specific area. There is improved tasking with Specials being involved in finding solutions to the priorities for specific areas. The Specials are part of the NPT team and therefore they feel valued for the contribution they give to a specific community. Where a requirement exists, as in a recent countywide operation, Specials from neighbouring areas will join together to tackle a singular issue.

Each sector area has a Special Inspector who is part of the area management team. They are responsible for the Specials in the NPT's on their areas in regard to welfare, standards and development. They also receive wider tasking on a hub area basis for involvement of the Specials.

Could the Commissioner tell the Panel how many NPTs now have a team of Specials attached to them?

All NPT's now have a team of specials attached. In some cases, there are several teams for one NPT (such as Swindon Town Centre), in others the Specials cover more than one area (such as Mere, Tisbury and Warminster); there are 27 NPT's across Wiltshire.

2 Agree an appropriate number of Special Constables and develops a strategy and implementation plan for the recruitment, retention and training of Special Constables.

Could the Commissioner confirm that his target of having 300 Specials is now agreed with the Chief Constable?

The strategy and implementation plan is agreed with the Chief Constable. Work is ongoing with regard to the target of 300 Specials. A recruitment strategy is in development to tackle four specific areas and is being led by People Services on behalf of the Special Constabulary. The areas are attraction, recruitment, training and retention.

To what extent has the force's Action Plan:

- Reduced the training time for new recruits using e-learning?

The People Development department have reviewed the training plan and aim to introduce the new structure of training in the September intake of 2015. The reason this has not been done for the May intake is due to the lead time that recruits require for home learning. The aim of this program will reduce the time frame from application to attestation from 12 months to 9 months.

This work is still ongoing.

- been successful in improving retention of Specials?

The work with the ORIGIN records system has been updated. The most recent national figures indicate a retention rate of 69%. Part of this is the large amount of recruitment from the Special Constabulary into the regular force as well into the role of PCSO. Now ORIGIN is back up to date, the Force will be in a position to work out it's retention rate going forward from this time, but not retrospectively. The work of People Services on the recruitment strategy for the Specials will give guidance to this area.

- increased the number of hours contributed by Specials?

This work stream has seen improvement in the documenting of hours worked. This will be improved with the rollout of the new hand held smartphones which will enable Specials to record their hours simply. The survey completed indicated areas of dissatisfaction, such as some supervision. Engagement work continues, as does development of Special supervisors with planned leadership wheel inputs as well as specific development inputs. Also, following the recent Specials promotion process, an initiative to include Specials in certain Specialisms will begin.

- increased the number of Specials qualified for independent patrol?

The portfolio for probationary Specials has been computerised and rolled out in Jan 2015. This will mean that the completion of the portfolio and specifically the management of probationary officers is much simplified. The monitoring of this is reported to be "ongoing" and meaningful figures are awaited.

This work is still ongoing, and a large number of Specials will be gaining their independence certificates at the award ceremony on 7th June 2015.

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.

In his response the Commissioner contrasted the current training programme of weekend training for around six months to having an intensive three week period at the beginning of the training period which has been trialled by Devon and Cornwall.

Which approach is now being followed by Wiltshire Police?

The activity of other forces has been examined. Wiltshire Police are moving forward with condensing the program by offering the non-restricted training elements as soon as the post is offered, and whilst vetting and references are being completed. Once these are received back, the restricted training takes place. This is aimed at reducing the training time frame by three months.

This work is still ongoing.

4 The Task Group recommended that the Commissioner considered various methods of recruiting, utilising and recognising the contribution of Volunteers. In response the Commissioner referred to the work of the force Lead on Volunteers, Scott Bateman, to whom the Panel's recommendations were passed.

DS Andy Murray has been selected to commence a 12 month attachment from 1/4/15 as Sgt to oversee Volunteers. This is a new role and will support the work of Scott Bateman and Sarah Holden (Volunteer Co-ordinator) who started in December 2014.

Is use now being made of the Volunteer Centre Wiltshire to help develop and enhance the Constabulary's use of volunteers?

Supt Deegan has chaired 2 partnership meetings with Fire Brigade, Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council specifically to discuss volunteering. Discussions have focussed around moving forward together, although Wiltshire Police are clearly at a more advanced stage than Wilts Fire. The two local authorities have a slightly different agenda in that they also recruit for local charities as well as seek volunteers themselves. At the last meeting (5/2/15) it was agreed to invite the Chair of 'Develop' who will come and assist the partners to co-ordinate their approach. Engagement with the Volunteer Centre Wiltshire (VCW) has taken place. However, the police are not yet in a position to go public with any of the new roles due to vetting/insurance matters that have now been addressed and an ongoing revision of volunteer policies and procedures around recruitment/retention and valuing volunteers. This will be done at the appropriate juncture in the development process.

Has the force signed up to the Valuing Volunteering Promise?

Not at this time.

Has, or will, the force introduce a time credits scheme to recognise the work of the many police officers who take part in unpaid voluntary work?

This is an aspiration but not currently.

Is any work being done to encourage employers to support and promote the recruitment of Police and Community Safety volunteers from within their workforces?

Yes, the police are actively engaged with the Employer Supported Policing (ESP) concept and are looking to expand this within Wiltshire with key employers for Special Constables and Police Community Volunteering roles. The Force Volunteer Strategic Lead, Scott Bateman, is part of this and receives two-days of paid support per month from his employer to undertake his public volunteer duties.

5 Confirms that Neighbourhood Alert will: (a) Be implemented with crime-reduction as its central purpose; (b) Be used to reinvigorate the Neighbourhood Watch schemes across Wiltshire and Swindon; and (c) co-ordinate the growing number of different 'Watch' schemes.

How far has the system been rolled out across the Area Boards and Localities?

Wiltshire and Swindon Community Messaging is now live in the entire of Wiltshire. (All Area boards and Localities).

Please illustrate how the system is being used to reinvigorate Neighbourhood Watch.

Neighbourhood Watch worked with Wiltshire Police to develop the system. The system offers Neighbourhood Watch a central database for its members which helps prevent the loss of member contact details when a coordinator or member moves on from an area. The system also offers a better flow of information between NHW, Wiltshire Police and the public.

The system also offers a central easy and simple way for members of Neighbourhood Watch to contact one another.

To what extent is the Commissioner's ambition to integrate the other 'Watch' schemes being realised?

Neighbourhood Watch are at present the only 'Watch' scheme integrated onto the system. The initial steps are currently being taken in regards to bringing on board Horse and Farm watch, linking in with the Rural Crime Team and Visav. Meetings have been had with representatives from Wiltshire Fire and Rescue and they have been shown the system and its benefits and given a quote for the cost of coming on board. They are now putting together a report for their senior management and Wiltshire Police are waiting to hear back. Other potential partners will be approached in due course.

6 The Panel acknowledged that achieving Neighbourhood Alert's full potential as a crime-reduction tool will require active and on-going commitment from Neighbourhood Policing Teams.

To what extent is the Neighbourhood Alert system being 'driven' by the NPTs?

After the NPTs initial training and launch events for Wiltshire and Swindon Community Messaging, the NPTs continue to sign up members of the public as part of their daily roles as well as using the system to send out messages. On the whole the NPTs have been positive and enthusiastic about the system and the number of members has steadily been increasing. They have also been proactive in signing the public up, and requesting more literature etc. when required. Due to the high turnover and changes in staffing additional training sessions have been set up to make sure

there is resilience within each NPT team for using Community Messaging. There has been a good uptake on these sessions.

How far has the PCC's Corporate Communications team got in training Neighbourhood Watch volunteers?

As with other forces who have bought in Neighbourhood Alert, it was not part of the Corporate Communications delivery remit to train NHW coordinators, as there is free support/training available to Wiltshire and Swindon NHW from national NHW and Neighbourhood Alert. However, to try and support the training provided by National NHW and Neighbourhood Alert, Corporate Communications produced a training guide which was designed for NHW coordinators. This guide remains with steering group members for formal feedback and once finalised will be distributed to coordinators. Training was also delivered by Corporate Communications to the Chair of NHW. Katrina Fleet is working closely with Amanda Clarke who is the Force's special point of contact (SPOC) for Neighbourhood Watch. Katrina has trained Amanda as an administrator on the system and they are working together to bring Neighbourhood Watch up to date on the system, by for example making sure all schemes are mapped correctly and all NHW members are signed up. Due to Neighbourhood Watch having some gaps in their structure at the top, training has not easily been cascaded down as originally planned, so Amanda is helping to rectify this gap.

7 The criteria used to monitor and assess Neighbourhood Alert's effectiveness.

When does the Commissioner intend to call for a formal review of the effectiveness of Neighbourhood Alert using the criteria he supplied to the Panel's Task Group?

As the roll out was 7 months long, (August 2014 – February 2015), the review will take place a year on, from February 2015 (so Feb 2016) when all the NPT areas have been launched. Otherwise an accurate review would only be possible for the initial four NPTs launched on the system, not the whole picture.

Angus Macpherson
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For Wiltshire and Swindon