

## **Police and Crime Panel PCC Responses**

24 July 2024

### **Item 6 – Quarterly Monitoring Report (Q4)**

#### **In Quarter Question:**

The National Black Police Association (NBPA) has withdrawn its support for the Police Race Action Plan, which sets out changes across policing to improve outcomes for Black people who work within or interact with policing. The NPBA also alleges that a number of chiefs have threatened to withdraw funding from the National Race Action Plan from next March, and that many are refusing to drive local action, despite signing up to the plan. Can the PCC please confirm that Dorset will continue to provide funding to the Action Plan and can the PCC please brief the panel on how he is bench marking the CC's progress in order to ensure this Plan is being implemented?

#### **PCC Response:**

Dorset Police, alongside a number of other Forces, has yet to confirm whether it will continue this funding – with the National Police Chiefs Council due to discuss the national approach in September.

I am keenly interested in progress against the Police Race Action Plan. The OPCC Chief Executive and Director of Operations attend the quarterly Legitimacy Board where the delivery of activity against this plan is considered. Following the last meeting of the Legitimacy Board, a Police Race Action Plan working group has been established to ensure tactical advice from communities is listened to and acted upon by Dorset Police. The Chief Executive and Director of Operations also attend this meeting and are actively involved in tracking progress against the Plan.

In July, Dorset Police also hosted a visit of the national Police Race Action Plan Director, which was attended by the Director of Operations who updated the team on the OPCC's work to support public scrutiny of police powers and standards.

The national Police Race Action Plan team are working on a new outcome framework, which they expect to be issued alongside the Autumn iteration of the Plan. This will further assist local benchmarking to be undertaken.

I will know more after the National Police Chiefs Council meeting.

#### **Priority One - Cut Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour**

1. The PCC has recently stated that "I expect Dorset Police to investigate every shoplifting report and to attend where a suspect has been detained or there has been an assault against staff". How is the PCC benchmarking the adherence by Dorset Police to this statement?

**PCC Response:**

This is tracked quarterly through the internal Police and Crime Plan dashboard, and exceptions are raised by me to the Chief Constable. Acquisitive crime is also monitored via the Force Performance Board, attended by the Chief Executive and I am briefed on relevant campaigns and operational activity – such as the ongoing Op Shopkeeper.

I Chair the Safer Dorset Business Partnership – which looks at reporting and data. Because of that Partnership we have a strategic, tactical and operational plan, which is called Operation Shopkeeper. Op Shopkeeper has been so successful, which is why you will see in the newspaper successful convictions of shoplifters.

I expect Dorset Police to investigate every shoplifting report and to attend where a suspect has been detained and for that attendance to be exemplary. I have raised previous issues with the Force about attendance and this has now improved.

This is a work in progress and a national problem. Nevertheless, we need to do more and I am determined to do so.

2. It has been reported that the new Bournemouth West MP, following an incident she described as ‘horrendous’ incident over the weekend, has called for an increase in police presence in the town. Can the PCC comment?

**PCC Response:**

Thank you, I was briefed on this incident and whilst I cannot divulge operational details, I will say that the position is more complex than has been reported, and I am optimistic that Dorset Police will be able to provide a more complete statement that will assure members of the public in due course.

Otherwise, Dorset Police has a well-established series of operations that are focused on the Bournemouth town centre. Of course Chair, I do not have an operational remit, but I am happy to reiterate public updates that Dorset Police has made elsewhere:

- The Bournemouth Town Team – is an ongoing joint initiative by Dorset Police, BCP Council and their partners to help deal with and prevent crime and ASB. For DP this includes an established team of 2 Sgts and 12 PCs, which will expand by a further 6 officers over the summer months to provide 2 officers for each section including the central area and beaches. Indeed in the incident in question, the complainant was able to make a report directly to officers who were on foot patrol in the area.
- Furthermore, Op Seaside is also running this summer to bolster visible foot patrols along the beaches - as officers from across BCP NPT will work closely with the Sea Front staff and CSAS officers on beach safety and enforcement of the PSPO to reduce ASB.

- Additionally, Op Track will ensure an enhanced visible uniformed presence in ASB and most serious violence hotspots at relevant times – putting in place additional patrolling.
- For June, under Op Track, 90 hours of double crewed foot patrolling was carried out across Bournemouth hotspots – leading to 5 arrests, 4 stop searches, 1 vulnerable female safeguarded, 26 ASB incidents managed at the scene, and a further 12 other actions to support the public and partners being taken.
- The Clear Hold Build scheme is also running in Bournemouth – known as ‘Bournemouth Together’ – this is a three-phase approach focused on
  - clearing serious organised crime from an area,
  - holding or stabilising the area to ensure the safe spaces remain and other criminals to not move in, and then...
  - building community resilience, improving trust and confidence in the police, and making the location a safer place to live and work.
- Since March 2024, 49 people have been arrested and illegal drugs, vapes and tobacco products valued over £200,000 have been seized as part of the initiative. 14 adults and five children have also been safeguarded and are receiving support from partner agencies.
- Operation Fireglow and Nightjar still continue as well, focusing on the night-time economy, and placing a minimum of 20 officers on foot patrol from 2100 hours into the early morning on Fridays and Saturdays.
- Aside from these Bournemouth specific operations the area, of course, also benefits from wider grip put in place across the wider Force geography.

## **Priority Two - Make Policing More Visible and Connected**

1. Can the PCC provide an update on the outcome of measures taken to improve and simplify the call handling process and communications to explain to the public how to use the website.

### **PCC Response:**

As Members will be aware, public contact to the police takes many forms, but the vast majority of reports are received via telephony or electronically via the Force website.

Contact via the 999 system is rightly prioritised. Figures for Quarter 4 show that Dorset Police received nearly 31,000 calls to 999 and the Force answered 92.1% of these calls within 10 seconds – against a target of 90%.

Non-emergency contact accounts for a higher proportion of the contact that Dorset Police receives from the public. Such contact is predominantly received via two routes – the 101 non-emergency telephone number and the various reporting forms that are

included on the Force's website. In Quarter 4 these totalled 35,000 and 12,000 respectively.

As with emergency contact, the non-emergency contact is also triaged (in part to ensure against misdirected emergency calls for service) so that it is correctly prioritised and appropriately directed. The majority of non-emergency calls are answered by the triage team in under 30 seconds. Of those that are then directed to the Force Control Centre call handlers, the performance data for Q4 shows that the average answer time was 15.7 minutes – a time that the Force is working to reduce, but that also represents an improvement compared to past years.

I wanted to provide this data not only because it is important to be transparent, but to also illustrate the sheer volume and complexity of demand. When we talk about public contact and the public's expectations, we do need to bear in mind both the fact that Dorset Police is handling a large volume of 999 calls and, also, that non-emergency calls are typically not matters that can be resolved instantly.

With that said, we know that at peak times 101 call answer times do increase and it is not uncommon for members of the public to raise concerns about such delays. Consequently, there is extensive scrutiny of the way in which the Force handles this contact to ensure that Dorset Police is providing both an efficient and effective service.

In terms of improving and simplifying the call handling process, the work to achieve this is extensive and ongoing – ranging from changes to training and recording processes, though to improvements to the technology and software at the call handlers' disposal. In the short term it is hoped that the training and process improvements will pay dividends, of course, but – as I have said before – the biggest gains will not be realised without changes to the software systems that are in place.

Alongside that transformation work, and to address the second part of your question, you are absolutely right that the best way to avoid non-emergency telephony delays – and to free up the phone lines for those who either need, or prefer, to use them – is for members of the public to use the Force website to report non-emergency matters.

Chair, we have talked about this extensively and I would encourage all Members to read the report that was submitted to the Panel last September for more detail. In a nutshell, however, I have been clear that the Force's communications approach in support of the launch of SOH was insufficient – with neither the benefits of the change, nor clear enough guidance for users being adequately disseminated ahead of the go-live date. Since the go-live date my office has worked closely with the Force to rectify this.

Over the last year, improvements have been made to the website as a direct consequence of my challenge to the Force; renewed communication has been distributed; and targeted stakeholder engagement days have been hosted. While it is recognised that major changes need agreement nationally, local fixes have been made. Indeed, in response to PCC and community feedback, the Force altered the 'tiles' on the website homepage to make it quicker and clearer for members of the public to report community intelligence.

Of course, there is more that can be done and I will continue to hold the Force to account for its public contact performance, as will my office. My Chief Executive and Director of Operations represent me on Force boards that consider public contact, and customer services is examined through the Use of Police Powers and Standards Scrutiny Panel, which I chair. To be clear, then, myself and my office keep public contact and reporting under regular review and will continue to do so robustly, while recognising the challenges that affect all police forces, on behalf of the public.

### **Priority Three - Fight Violent Crime and High Harm**

1. The Pineapple Project ultimately, centres around listening to the voices of young women and aims to protect them from harm by showing there are responsible people who care. How can further initiatives enable Dorset to become a safer environment for women?

#### **PCC Response:**

Aside from the Pineapple Project expansion within Weymouth, Portland, Swanage and Dorchester, the OPCC manages and funds many ongoing projects to improve the safety of woman and girls in public places and the night-time economy, such as:

- **Additional CCTV in high priority areas** – areas including Bournemouth, Sherborne and Weymouth. Plus connectivity of cameras within town council areas into the CCTV control room to allow for increased surveillance.
- **BCP Unity Promise** – 30 venues have signed up to the promise to actively promote night safety, demonstrating to staff and customers that their organisation takes women's safety at night seriously and reminding customers and staff that whilst BCP as a whole is safe, any experiences of harassment should be reported – a sentiment I actively encourage.
- **Alcohol & Consent training** – through STARS (Sexual Trauma & Recovery Service) to provide guidance and education to 15-20 year olds in the school and university setting, covering alcohol and consent, bystander training and respectful relationships.
- **Bournemouth & Poole College SPOC** – also through STARS, this is a new role based within student welfare at the College that provides advice to both students and staff, helps the college with opportunities to help protect students from harmful sexual behaviour and also inappropriate sexual relationships.
- **Licensing SAVI** – an industry standard self-assessment to help enable licensed venues identify opportunities to provide a safer and more secure environment. This includes topics such as, VAWG, Drink Spiking, CSE, Violence, ASB, Theft, Burglary.

The OPCC has also just hosted a VAWG Practitioners Event at Kingston Maurward College, focusing on awareness raising in early years education regarding appropriate behaviours, healthy relationships, and sexual violence amongst young people. The event also offered support for those working with children and the opportunity to

showcase their services. I was very pleased to see Dr Mytton in attendance, and I thank her for the kind note she sent to my staff thanking them for organising the event. Furthermore, alongside these preventative activities, we are working tirelessly with the Force to improve the response to VAWG offences through the work of the PCC VAWG Scrutiny Panel, which assesses reports of VAWG related criminality and explores ways to improve the response and support offered to victims.

Needless to say, VAWG remains high on my agenda, and I remain steadfastly committed to the ongoing commitment to improve the safety of woman and girls in Dorset.

2. A review of projects such as the Knifecrime Awareness Campaign will generate further understanding of ways to prevent knife crime and related forms of criminality. To what extent can intelligence be gathered to better understand the most difficult challenge of prevention?

**PCC Response:**

Dorset remains a safe county, with a comparatively very low rate of knife-enabled crime. Therefore, whilst gathering local intelligence will always be fruitful and is certainly a focus of local delivery partners such as the community safety partnerships and the police, the OPCC is also able to leverage the significant learning from other areas who have more complex challenges, and understand how the national best practice established through the national network of violence reduction units can be employed within Dorset, for the best effect.

My new violence reduction and prevention team is – as their name suggests – building my office’s capability and expertise in the area of prevention, and I look forward to telling you more about this in the coming months and years.

**FY 23/24 Q4 finance questions:**

1. Devon & Cornwall Police and Dorset Police have entered into a 10-year IT services contract for public contact, mobile phones, BWV cameras and radio systems. Can the PCC please confirm how this project is being funded, what scrutiny his office has undertaken of this project in order to ensure fairness for Dorset taxpayers and how will success be benchmarked by his office?

**PCC Response:**

This contract is being funded through existing provisions for ICT servicing and maintenance.

The contract was agreed by the PRISM Board, of which the Chief Executive is a member. In terms of value for money, this contract is marginally cheaper than the anticipated costs of maintaining the previous in-house provision of support services, but importantly improves the provision to the frontline in terms of 24/7 availability to access technical support and expertise.

Success is being measured through a variety of metrics which are separated into delivery 'towers' covering: Customer Service, Application Services, End User Workplace, Technical Security, Hosting Services, Data and Voice Network Services, Field Mobile Services, Airwave Services, and Messaging and Collaboration.

My Chief Executive continues to robustly test the Force assumptions around the delivery of the wider ICT programme, and escalate any concerns to me, but this is not a current one.

2. The National Police Chiefs' Council has asked the PRRB for an above inflation pay award of 6%. If endorsed, what impact will this have on finances?

**PCC Response:**

Typically Forces build the expectation of a more realistic pay rise within the MTFP. For example, a pay award of 2% was budgeted for September 2023 with an additional 1% held in contingency. This was in line with the assumption included within the Comprehensive Spending Review and therefore our core grant funding. The pay award was then confirmed at 7%, and as the vast majority of Forces had not budgeted for this, central funding was made available to cover both this and the police staff pay award.

The expectation remains that should an above inflation pay award be agreed, that there will continue to be support from central funding to meet this financial burden, otherwise it would not be sustainable for individual Forces.

For 2024/25 we have assumed a pay award of 2.5% from September 2024, in line with most other forces. If the pay award is agreed at 6%, this would result in additional costs of £2.9m in 2024/25 and £5m in 2025/26 when the full year effect is felt, for both officers and staff. Assuming that a central grant is provided as in the last couple of years and distributed according to the funding formula then we might expect a shortfall of £0.7m in the current year and £1.2m shortfall next year.