



VOLUNTARY SECTOR LIAISON COMMITTEE – 16TH MARCH 2016

SUBJECT: ITEMS OF INTEREST TO THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

REPORT BY: POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR GWENT

Improved Police Technology

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent sanctioned the rollout of brand new technology for police officers in Gwent which replaced traditional pocket notebooks with state-of-the-art mobile devices.

To get more officers out of stations and maximise the time they spend in the community, Gwent PCC Ian Johnston supported a bid and secured nearly £1.5 million from the Home Office's Police Innovation Fund over two years so that Gwent Police, in collaboration with South Wales Police, could develop a new specialist policing 'app' and associated technology which can be used on smart phone and tablet devices.

The technology has been developed, trialled and meticulously tested over the last year to ensure it meets all police officer requirements. The two key features are the Electronic Pocket Notebook and the I-Patrol mobile 'app' which enables officers at crime scenes to immediately capture audio and visual accounts from victims, witnesses and offenders and to upload these files and information obtained directly into a shared computer system without the need to return to stations.

Through their new devices, officers can access intelligence at the point of need when attending incidents, enabling them to be better prepared and informed before they arrive at the call. This reduces the risk to officers and provides a better service to repeat and vulnerable victims. The devices can even send through 'push notification' messages with vital information to officers on route to an incident.

The quality of information and evidence obtained at crime scenes is enhanced, plus it allows Forces to share cross-border data quickly and have rapid access to key information which saves both time and money.

Office for National Statistics (ONS) Crime Figures – January 2016

The Office for National Statistics have released the latest Crime figures for England and Wales which look at the 12 months to September 2015 as compared to the 12 months to September 2014. The figures show that a total of 37,306 crimes were recorded in the Gwent Force area during the latest period which is an increase of just over 1400 crimes.

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent (PCC) campaigned to improve force practice to ensure that recording data was accurate, believing that reliable and accurate data is extremely important to better direct limited resources. The Chief Constable has shown strong leadership in placing the quality of service the public receive before the need to meet numerical targets. As a result of continuous improvement in recording practices nationwide, 32 of the 43 Forces in England and Wales are now showing an increase in recorded crime.

There is some really good news for Gwent, especially in respect of the significant reduction in the number of dwelling burglaries (-11%). This reduction is nearly double the national average and shows that the Force's operation to target and prosecute burglars is working. There was also a reduction in the number of incidents of criminal damage in comparison with an upward trend nationally.

Recorded sexual offences both nationally and in Gwent have increased and this reflects the public's increased confidence in reporting these crimes. Six out of ten of the serious sexual offences against children recorded in Gwent are of an historical nature. There has also been an increase in the overall satisfaction of crime victims in the service they receive from Gwent Police and this direction of travel is continuing.

The increases in some crime categories are likely to be down to a combination of factors; including more consistent crime recording, and greater confidence and willingness of victims to engage with police and partner agencies to report such incidents knowing that they will be listened to and their reports acted upon.

The statistics don't include work around speeding, drink and drug driving and other offences that police have a duty to investigate.

HMIC PEEL Inspection of Gwent Police – Effectiveness

As part of the 2015 PEEL (police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy) inspection, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) looked at all police forces in England Wales in June and July this year to see how effective they are at protecting those who are vulnerable from harm and supporting victims. This included an in-depth consideration of the service offered to victims of domestic abuse.

The inspection looked at 4 areas of force performance:

- How well does the force identify those who are vulnerable and assess their level of risk and need?
- How well does the force respond to vulnerable victims?
- How well does the subsequent police action and work with partners keep victims safe?
- How well does the force respond to and safeguard specific vulnerable groups, and how well prepared is it to tackle child sexual exploitation?

Gwent Police achieved 'Good' ratings in each, with HMIC highlighting that it was 'clear that vulnerability is a high priority the Force' and that the Force is 'effective at supporting victims and protecting from harm those who are vulnerable.'

HMIC found that the Force has made improvements since the last domestic abuse inspection and that positive outcomes are apparent, such as the Force now having a prosecution rate for domestic abuse which is greater than the national average.

The report also highlighted the role that the Connect Gwent victims' hub, launched by PCC Ian Johnston earlier this year, has played in addressing the needs of victims of crime. HMIC findings demonstrated an increase in public confidence in Gwent Police and the 'overall satisfaction' of crime victims in the service they receive.

Key areas of success for Gwent Police highlighted in the report:

- Gwent Police makes good use of information sharing with partner organisations
- That it was clear that staff are victim-focused and understand the importance of identifying vulnerability;
- The Force is good at identifying repeat and vulnerable victims, and has clear processes in place for assessing risk;
- That staff consider carefully the appropriate level of police response and its officers work well with partners to manage the risk to victims;
- The Force's operational procedures to protect the vulnerable and support victims are

- considered to be good;
- Gwent Police has worked hard to develop a culture where vulnerability is considered at all points of contact with the public;
- The Force is influential in the development of policy and operational practice in the county's children and adult safeguarding boards.

HMIC PEEL Inspection of Gwent Police Force – Legitimacy

The latest inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) specifically looked at how legitimate Gwent Police is at keeping people safe and reducing crime.

Throughout 2015, HMIC's PEEL Legitimacy inspection programme assessed the culture within Gwent Police, and how this is reflected in the force's public engagement, use of Taser and compliance with the Best Use of Stop and Search scheme. This is the first time HMIC has graded forces in England and Wales on their legitimacy.

The inspection looked at three areas:

- To what extent does practice and behaviour reinforce the wellbeing of staff and an ethical culture?
- How well does the force understand, engage with and treat fairly the people it serves to maintain and improve its legitimacy?
- To what extent are decisions taken on the use of stop and search and Taser fair and appropriate?

Gwent Police received an overall rating of 'good' but was found to be 'outstanding' in the way it engaged with local communities and the way it uses a range of methods to understand the needs of its local communities. The report highlighted:

- Gwent Police is making clear efforts to develop and maintain an ethical working environment across the Force;
- The Force has a good understanding of the communities it serves and uses a range of methods to engage with people in its local neighbourhoods, seek their views and keep them informed;
- Gwent Police complies with the Best Use of Stop and Search scheme, and use of Taser is fair and appropriate;
- And that complaints and misconduct cases are dealt with in a fair and consistent manner.

Last year, the PCC praised the Force for receiving good ratings across the board from HMIC in both the 'Valuing the Police' report and the 'Vulnerability' report.

The PCC has been very pleased with the good HMIC reports in the last couple of months and praised the Chief Constable and his team for the strong leadership they have shown. The PCC commented "that it was even more remarkable when you consider the financial challenges the Force has faced and the position Gwent Police was in eighteen months ago when it was deemed as requiring improvement across the board by inspectors. To receive three good reports in a row in the last year is a remarkable turnaround to say the least and is a clear indication that the Force is heading in the right direction. This should reassure the public that their Force is in good health moving forward."

For further information and to access the full report visit.

www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk

Precept Consultation January 2016

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent (PCC) has a duty to ensure that all the people who live in Gwent have an efficient and effective police service and has a legal requirement to set the police budget. With this in mind, the PCC launched an online 'Have Your Say' consultation on setting the precept level for 2016/17.

As a result of cuts to policing, between the period 2008/09 to 2020/21, Gwent Police would potentially face a deficit of £64 million. To date, the policing service in Gwent had delivered over £37 million of efficiency savings to address the gap. However, the efficiency savings identified in the budget report for 2016/17 would not fully close the funding gap.

For example, the average band D household in Gwent paid £211.62 per year in 2015/16 or £4.07 per week. A 0% increase to the precept next year would mean that Gwent Police would suffer a funding shortfall of over £1.8 million. However, an increase of 3.99% in the precept (£8.44 per year per band D household) would mean that Gwent Police retained the current budget.

Considering the short timescale, the number of respondents who completed the questionnaire was very good at 526 respondents.

The results were clearly in favour of paying the higher percentage increases of 3.99% and 5%, with 3.99% having 168 votes and 5% increase achieving 161 votes.

The Police and Crime Panel, who are responsible for supporting and challenging the Commissioner's decisions, accepted his recommendation to set the Council Tax Precept at 3.99% for 2016/17. This means that the average Gwent household (Band D) will pay an additional 16 pence a week for their policing and related services during 2016/17.

Police Recruitment

Gwent Police has seen an overall reduction of nearly 300 police officers since 2010/11 as a result of austerity. Gwent Police will recruit up to 100 frontline officers over the next three years to replace those who have retired or have left the Force already. This marks the end of an austerity-driven freeze on the external recruitment of police constables at Gwent Police which has been in place since August 2013.

The recruitment and training process will be rolled out progressively over the next three years and it is envisaged that up to 60 new constables will be recruited in 2016 in order to maintain levels of operational policing. The recruitment and training of another 40 police constables will be spread out over the remainder of the two years and the new officers will be deployed on the beat throughout the region.

With the aim of attracting applicants from a broad cross-section of society and to ensure that the recruitment process reflects the diverse nature of Gwent communities, the Force is hosting special awareness raising sessions with black and minority ethnic communities throughout the region as part of the recruitment drive.

The funding of the Force and the provision of policing services form part of the PCC's statutory duties and it is his responsibility to ensure that Gwent has appropriate levels of policing to meet the requirements of communities whilst making the necessary savings.

Independent Custody Visiting Scheme

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent have appointed 8 new independent custody visitors (ICV). These are responsible for ensuring the fair treatment of people in police custody. The ICVs have been fully vetted by Gwent Police and attended rigorous training courses before commencing their work.

ICVs are specially trained volunteers who make unannounced visits to police custody units to check on the welfare of detainees and the facilities they are held in. They will play a vital role in ensuring that the wellbeing of people who have been arrested is monitored and that issues relating to individuals or the custody environment are addressed appropriately.

Police cells in Ystrad Mynach and Newport are visited at least once a week by the custody visitors. They can also access police stations at any time of the day or night, without prior warning, to speak to people who have been arrested and look at the condition of the facilities.

People in custody have certain rights including access to free legal advice, having someone told where they are, to be fed and have their medical needs looked after. Custody visitors also check that appropriate adults have been requested for vulnerable detainees and ensure that cultural and religious beliefs are met with and that translators are provided when requested. The custody visitors ensure these rights are upheld and they can speak with police officers and interview as many detainees as they see fit. They can never know the detainee's name so as to ensure they treat everybody the same. They also look at food preparation areas, blanket stores and the medical room and anything not up to scratch is recorded and flagged up with custody staff immediately.

Low level issues, such as a detainee complaining they are cold, can be referred immediately to the Custody Sergeant who can deal with it instantly. If a problem cannot be fixed then it is reported to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner which has responsibility for monitoring the independent custody scheme in Gwent. Each visit is concluded with a report which is sent to the PCC and any issues arising are discussed during specific quarterly meetings with the Police Force.

Mental Health Concordant

The new Wales Mental Health Crisis Care Concordat is a joint agreement between the Welsh Government and 28 key organisations and partners throughout Wales which highlights how they will work together to help people going through a mental health crisis. It aims to help reduce the number of people detained inappropriately in police cells and drive out the variation in standards across Wales.

The Concordat sets out the standards of care people should expect if they experience a mental health crisis and details how the emergency services should respond. The voices of those who have suffered mental health crisis also helped shape the document.

Some of the key points of collective commitment by all the partners include:

- To cease to use police custody suites as a place of safety, except in exceptional circumstances and never for a child/young person under the age of 18
- To ensure there is access to mental health professional advice at the point of crisis, available 24 hours each day and every day;
- Police vehicles will rarely be used to convey people in crisis save for the most violent of individuals and only exceptionally to transport people between NHS facilities;
- Partners and the third sector should be supported to widen their ambition in developing 'new' places of safety and providing alternatives to in-patient care at all stages e.g. sanctuary houses, drug and alcohol support.

By working effectively in partnership and adopting a unified approach, standards have already improved in Gwent and it is envisaged that the new agreement will help to make further progress. In 2012/13 an average of 25 people per month were detained by Gwent Police under the Mental Health Act and 58% of them were taken to police custody for assessment rather than a health facility. In 2014/15 however, an average of 30 people a month were detained by the Force under the Mental Health Act, with 60% being taken to a health facility for assessment which is deemed an appropriate place of safety.

The Concordant recognises that people in mental health crisis are some of the most vulnerable members of our community and they need specialist care and attention. As opposed to being detained in police custody, especially as many have not committed a crime.

The Mental Health Crisis Care Concordant can be accessed via the link:

<http://gov.wales/docs/dhss/publications/151210reporten.pdf>

PCC's Funding of a Third Sector Development Officer

The PCC in partnership with Torfaen Voluntary Alliance and Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO) agreed to fund a Third Sector Development Officer for 12 months to map the third sector that provide services aligned to the PCC's police and crime priorities. The initial focus would concentrate on the larger organisations which would be in a position to tender for public service provision and the next tier of services who would like to be involved.

The Third Sector Development Officer arranged 5 Consortia training events across the Force area, with one in each Local Authority. These were held in February and March. The aim has been to encourage and inform third sector organisations (and Local Authorities) of the benefits of working together in consortia to be able to bid for the provision of public sector services.

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