



**POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR BEDFORDSHIRE  
DELIVERY AND BEATING CRIME MINUTES – PART 2**

**21<sup>st</sup> February 2022**

<b>Attending:</b>	<b>Festus Akinbusoye, Police Crime Commissioner - OPCC (FA)</b>
	<b>Garry Forsyth, Chief Constable - Force (GF)</b>
	<b>Phil Wells, Chief Finance Officer - Force (PW)</b>
	<b>Trevor Rodenhurst, Deputy Chief Constable – Force (TR)</b>
	<b>Sharn Basra, Assistant Chief Constable – Force (SB)</b>
	<b>Anna Cuthbert, Interim Chief Executive - OPCC (AC)</b>
	<b>Wayne Humberstone, Head of Delivery – OPCC (WH)</b>
	<b>Katie Beaumont, Transparency Manager – OPCC (KB)</b>
	<b>Rachel Glendenning, Staff Officer - Force (RG)</b>
	<b>Gemma McCormack, PA to PCC and Chief Executive - OPCC (GMc)</b>

<b><u><a href="https://www.bedfordshire.pcc.police.uk/meetings/">PUBLIC SECTION – Recording available - https://www.bedfordshire.pcc.police.uk/meetings/</a></u></b>
<b><u>ITEM 9: OPCC UPDATES</u></b>
<b>9.1 PCC Update</b>
<p>FA welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that as Police and Crime Commissioner, this is where he gets to hold the Chief Constable to account on the delivery of the Police and Crime Plan and what is being done by the Force to cut crime in Bedfordshire to protect victims and prevent crime from happening in the first place. FA updated that the Board have been through an initial meeting which is a closed section where members discussed sensitive issues, which they cannot put in the public domain for various reasons, but some of them will be featuring in this section of the meeting.</p> <p>FA advised that he has agreed to funding of £200,000 for the Safer Roads Fund and this has gone out already to several of the town, parish and ward councils across the county, which is designed to help and educate road users, build infrastructure in some cases as well as help to keep our roads safer across the county. The commissioning programme is going on, some of the Partners will have already been informed on their position in terms of funding for 2022/2023 and FA stated that he is pleased to inform that quite several Partners will be getting a multi-year funding settlement so that they can plan longer term. FA anticipates that all of the commissioned partners will have information about the funding that they will be receiving or otherwise by the end of March 2022 which will be in time for the new financial year.</p>



## 9.2 Force Activity against the Police and Crime Plan

TR advised that at the previous meeting it was discussed on what we are doing to map all activities against the Police and Crime Plan with a view to, in the new performance year, agenda the whole year ahead so that we can focus on different elements of the plan and corresponding activity. TR confirmed that this is all on track and requested at the next meeting we agenda an item where TR can outline a proposed timetable and take any views and feedback on the plan to take us through to the next year. TR advised for the next meeting there will be an outline of the Plan for April onwards.

## **ITEM 10: COMMUNITY POLICING**

### **10.1 Community Policing Model Establishment Update**

PW advised from the report there are various parts of the community policing model including Hubs, Hate Crime, Rural Crime and Community Cohesion. The main area we focus on is the Hubs because they are the visible Police Officers and as reported last time, we have got a budget for 67 of those PC's across those Hubs and we currently sit at 65 which is the same as we reported last time round and we have made a commitment in the Force to try and maintain a vacancy level of no lower than 95% in those Hubs and 65 is doing that. PCSO's are slightly down on where they should be but there is a recruitment intake coming in at the moment and that will put us back up to where we need to be. Overall, we are in a good place around the model and the community hub model.

PW updated that the focus in terms of the activity this time is around Bedford Borough. The team continue with Operation Primrose which is focussed on the Tavistock Street area in Bedford where we have seen real good interventions by the community team looking at both short term and longer term problem solving and we are seeing some good reductions in terms of ASB and crime in that area. There has been about a 64% reduction in ASB and 52% reduction in crime in that area. This continues as there are certain parts of the year where the demand increases but there is a good focus on that area of Bedford. Another area in Bedford is around cuckooing and we have a good benefit from our Officers having a good knowledge and understanding of the local area where they were able to identify a property that was being cuckooed. They worked with the rest of the Force around this issue and they were able to disrupt what was a dangerous county line and also allowed us to safeguard two vulnerable people from that address who were being cuckooed.

FA asked if we have a breakdown of numbers for each of the three areas. PW advised in terms of Officers in Luton, we are 22/24, in Central Bedfordshire we are 24/25 and in Bedford 19/18.

FA asked in terms of the deployment and how the Officers are being deployed, what are they tasked to do outside of the operations that are currently going on. GF advised that we have ringfenced our community officers to make sure that they are there specifically to deal with issues of local concerns, and they are not being distracted to deal with Force response or other commitments. Whilst on



occasions we do have to do that, as we are an emergency service and we do have to do that primarily, when we have spoken with the Officers, they have advised that they feel very able to be committed to dealing with the issues that are relevant to their local communities. These issues are generated in a number of ways; through the community setting meetings and community setting priority meetings that we have with local residents that are advertised by the teams and local residents can either attend in person or online and give their views on what the things are that matters to them within their local community. The other way that we generate priorities is through the Force Tasking and Co-Ordination Process, as well as through problem solving activity that is directed through the Force tasking process. SB advised that we follow the principles and the pillars of neighbourhood policing within the Force, three of those are; solving local problems and what matters to the local communities, targeting activity and engaging communities and having the multiagency approach. This week Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough have taken up the TREE programme (Tackling, Reducing and Ending Exploitation) where our neighbourhood officers are working with children services, health and education and meeting with young people just to highlight the perils of vulnerability and exploitation.

FA asked regarding the performance dashboard, a lot of the intel submissions are coming in from Officers and these numbers have been going up, might this have something to do with the fact that we have Officers being more present, on the ground they are seeing more and collecting more intel. SB agreed and advised that we promote the fact that local Officers need to know their community and knowing the key engagement opportunities but also, asking them to stretch themselves in terms of understanding what the serious and organised picture looks like on their area. We fully understand that one PCSO won't be able to address all of those issues, but our PCSO's take great pride in knowing about their communities and all of the potential threats. If they see someone who has a new car, someone who is hanging around with someone different, they can and do submit that intelligence.

FA asked around problem solving, is there an element of tasking that community officers are given that is geared around a longer-term problem solving of issues in communities. SB advised the Force Tactical Tasking Co-ordination Group (FTTCG) is not specifically just Police attended, we have local CSP managers (Community Safety Partnerships) at those meetings as well. If there is a local issue that community policing doesn't think that they can solve on their own, they can come into the FTTCG where this can be discussed further with other agencies. An example of this was one of the issues on Tavistock Street was to put up a wall and a gate to block off some of the alleyways, this was brought to FTTCG and this action has now been completed.

FA asked if there are currently any areas of concern. SB shared that there are none that stand out and said that this is because we are very flexible on a daily basis and have additional Force assets



at our disposal. If on any one day there is a peak in demand, we can mobilise resources from other areas to go and support the community officers and we do this every day.

FA asked regarding the 95% fill rate for most of the roles, are there any plans to fill the remaining 4 vacancies. PW advised that we are about 2 under at present and we will continue to try and fill those, but will continue to try and remain at the 95%.

## **ITEM 11: EFFECTIVENESS**

### **11.1 Recruitment and Retention**

FA thanked Julie Henderson and her team for the really good work they have done in putting this paper together, it is quite compelling in terms of some of the challenges that we face. FA stated that the reason why he has asked for this, is one of the pledges that he made during the campaign and also as part of the Police and Crime Plan, is to recruit more Police Officers which thankfully we are doing now compared to what was happening about a decade ago. We also need to focus on retention, there is a cost to taxpayers and residents and also in terms of reputation of the Force. FA stated that if we don't get this issue of retention right, whilst we want to improve recruitment, we also want to do a lot better in retention.

PW advised in terms of context, Bedfordshire Police has made a very strong case that it is underfunded in terms of the level of funding it receives from the Government and we have equated that to around 380 Officers which has been well received by Policing Ministers and the Home Office in terms of understanding where we start. In 2021/2022 we have had 98 organisational Police Officer leavers which is approximately 10 per month and 59% of those are resigning, of those 98% - 38 are student officers within the first 2 years of service which is around 39%. Prior to 2018/2019 the number of people we were recruiting were just to replace those that were leaving, since then with precept flexibility and uplift programme which is the national programme to increase Officers by 20,000 we are seeing a huge amount of Officers coming into Bedfordshire Police which is more than it was previously. What we have also seen in that time is a huge drive to change the diversity within our organisation and in the early years we saw some really good numbers of people entering the organisation, what we learnt from that is that the organisation was not ready for that type of difference within the organisation which is the reason we brought in our Workforce Development Team. This is a big investment into making sure that when we recruit people into the organisation, we follow their journey and be able to retain them rather than see them leave in their first two years of service.

Since January 2020 we have recruited 360 new recruits and we have seen 66 of those leave, 58 have been resignations. Through exit interviews that we complete with all of the Officers to understand why they are leaving the organisation, the majority have stated that stress is a big factor for them. That links back to, we are asking Officers to come into an organisation whereby the



demand is most probably greater than a lot of other Police Forces and therefore what we are seeing is those student officers have been struggling to manage their NVQ and the demand we are placing on them to be a Police Officer. We are starting to get that balance right and have brought in Student Development Officers who are now working alongside those students to make sure that their journey in the first two years is as smooth as it can be, providing that extra support to make sure that they are getting their qualification but at the same time making sure that they get the right level of policing experience in those first two years but with a major focus on the NVQ as that is what they need to obtain in their first two years. At the moment there are 4 Student Development Officers and we are looking to increase that in 2022/2023 to make sure that as we see an increase in student officers we have enough people to provide that dedicated support. We have created two extra resources that focus on positive action and that is making sure that when we are looking at diversity within the organisation, we have got people who are providing a dedicated focus to that. We have increased our wellbeing capacity with two Wellbeing Advisors who work with our Officers to make sure that we are putting a strong emphasis on the wellbeing side of our Officers. The Employee Assistance programme also provides a further level of support to our Officers.

We have already made some big changes however we are still seeing a high level of resignation from those student officers and some of the things we are looking to do to enhance this is; working with the Open University to see if we can look at a framework in terms of enhancing that student officer journey, we are working with the College of Policing and looking at some of the best practices that they are seeing around attrition and retention, we have recently engaged with the National Uplift Team who are looking at working with us to ensure that everything we are doing is as positive as it can be and we are also looking at how we can invest into our supervision as we place a lot of reliance on our Tutor Constables and Sergeants in terms of the number of student officers we have within the organisation. As part of the budget for 2022/2023, we have increased the number of Inspectors by 8, a couple of those will go directly into the Student Development Team and the rest will enhance our Supervisory capability across the organisation so that we can support those Sergeants and Tutor Constables in the work they are doing in supporting the student journey. We have a real focus from the Force Exec with first line supervisors which is Sergeants and Inspectors where, the Exec is sitting down with those as individuals and finding out some of the issues they have but also, recognising the context that they are operating in and understanding what we can do to support them in terms of their journey in working with the student officers. This is the work we are currently doing and whilst we have seen a slight improvement in attrition, there is still some work we need to do.

GF advised that this is something that we had anticipated would be an issue when we started to grow the organisation. It is the right thing to do to focus on retention both for the personal development of the individuals but also the organisation aspect and value as well. The thing we never know is what we have prevented in terms of the interventions we have made, so it might be





that the number would be higher had it not been for the work that we have already done. The reality of this is a difficult one as this is going to go on for several years, we know we are an outlier nationally in terms of retention, some of that is the sheer number of people we are recruiting. When you look into it, we know that people are going to leave policing in the first 2 – 3 years of service across the UK and then when you look at the number of our officers that are currently in training that means that we are going to see that number feed through into a higher number of officer leavers. This is a challenge for us as we move forward and it will continue to be an issue for us, no matter how much we do, for the next 3 – 5 years at least as that is how long we are going to be in that uplift cycle. When we transition into PEQF we are going to have officers on a 3 year training programme instead of a 2 year training programme. We are not at all complacent around it we are engaging with everyone that we can, we have already been on it for two years but it just goes to show the scale and the real challenge that is involved in this piece.

GF stated that people in Bedfordshire are used to carrying heavy workloads and we rely hugely on Officers and staff to do more than their colleagues in other Forces because of the volume of workload that we have and not everyone is able to adjust with that. This is compounded by the fact that our Tutors are fatigued, our Sergeants are really busy as are our Inspectors and hence why we are investing the time in them to make clear the things that are important to us around caring for our staff, all the wellbeing support we have in place but this is a tricky problem for Policing and for us in Bedfordshire. We are committed to making this the best environment that we can to work in. People come into policing with a certain expectation of what they think they are going to be doing and that tends to be the frontline response activity but we are not in a position where we can accommodate everyone on where they want to go originally in their posting as some of the critical need in the organisation is in areas other than response.

FA advised that he is glad that the Force Exec acknowledge something that can be downplayed as it can't be downplayed, as when compared to other Forces it is a very concerning picture. FA asked what plans are there to make sure that people are joining with as clear a picture of what policing is like. TR advised that he has recently attended our recruitment evenings and advised that we are very honest with people, Policing is a fantastic career, there is no other job like it and you get the chance to change peoples lives almost on a daily basis however, no matter how graphic you are in describing some of the situations you may find yourself in as a young officers, unless you actually go to a scene of a disturbing nature you are never going to know how you will be able to manage and handle that. Although we do all that we can to prepare people for that, the reality is that it is not a job for everybody, but it is an amazing career, so we must have that balance. We are very graphic and real at those situations to explain what it means and what it will entail, we allow people aspiring to join the Police to come for a ride along with Officers however this has been a hindered by COVID,



but we are coming through that now. There are all of those opportunities to have some insight as well as joining the Special Constabulary etc to get exposure to policing.

GF advised that we have not been able to resume ride alongs' yet, but we will be in the very near future. GF advised that he gets to see perspective joiners at our recruitment sessions and we are very realistic in terms of the challenges that they will face. GF stated that he either then sees them at a station or week 1 when they have just got their uniform and are going through initial training. He then sees all of them on an individual basis when they conclude their NVQ process at the end of their two years.

FA asked what is being put in place to deal with the stress levels and to deal with the emotional shock/trauma to deal with situations these new officers will come across. GF advised that if you are assaulted on duty, you will be contacted by a member of the Executive within 24 hours, this is very important and even if officers say they do not want to be contacted, we will still send them an email anyway just encouraging them to make contact. Part of the workforce development has been really developing workforce care and the 'You Matter' brand which links in with the 'Oscar Kilo' brand. Nationally, we have refreshed our EAP provider and now, we have TRIM counselling for people who have suffered traumatic episodes and we are also looking at trauma processing techniques but there is a whole raft of things that are in place to support officers in respect of whatever the challenges they face. We even support with financial support as policing as a service received a 0% pay rise last year whereas other public services did, we need to be a public service employer of choice and part of that is around pay policy and we need to get that right as the economy emerges from COVID then people are looking at what they can get for not working shifts, not having a high workload, not dealing with stressful situations and putting yourself in a position which might risk your mental health.

FA advised that he is concerned about the ratio of Tutors to Student Officers and even more so the number of SDO's. It was mentioned about the number being increased, do you know what it is being increased to. PW advised that we are doing a piece of work around focussing on that student journey and understanding what that looks like and how different it needs to be. Whilst we have an idea of the number, we are just running that piece of work through and there is a paper coming back to our Executive Board in March which we will let FA have sight of and this will show what it is going to look like and where that investment may go.

FA asked regarding some of the training that the Force Exec are delivering to middle and frontline managers. What does this training look like and what are you hoping to achieve from it? GF advised that we completed some work around the culture two years ago and understanding where we were as an organisation and where people wanted us to be. As a result of that, we derived a 'Be You' approach which is focussed on professionalism, compassion, courageousness, inclusivity and being you in the organisation and being you because you matter, this is the culture that people identified,



and we wanted to be part of. We have had a number of days with our senior leaders, GF has met on a 1:1 with all Inspectors and a 3:1 with all Sergeants about 18 months ago to start that piece of work off around what his expectations are of the leaders within the organisation, following on from that we have got the final day with all of our Inspectors and Sergeants which will put through around 250 people in total once we have done that. As we move into the summer we have 'Better for Bedfordshire' events which will see everyone within the organisation have a similar input around the culture of the organisation. We have commissioned an external body called 'Above Difference' to work with us specifically around enhancing our cultural intelligence so that people have the right tools to delivery in complex environments both internally and externally, but it is all very much focussed on the culture of the organisation in creating the right culture which enables us to then go on a delivery the right performance.

FA asked if this programme is also trying to tackle the issues with the public confidence in policing. GF agreed that we talk about confidence being the foundation of all policing in the UK because we police by consent and have legitimacy in the eyes of the community. We only have legitimacy if we consistently have high standards and live in accordance with the code of ethics and it is a reinforcement of exactly those kind of things in the conversations we are having, the importance of diversity, not just visibly but in terms of thinking. FA advised that he is glad we have been able to have this conversation as there are some very positive signs of work being done by the Force and by staff and officers. FA shared that he is pleased to see the outcomes of the fantastic job the Force is doing but, remains very concerned about retention and stated that he also plays a role in this and is willing to do whatever he can in supporting the Force in improving the retention picture.

## **12: VOICE OF THE PUBLIC**

### **12.1 Issues raised to the PCC**

FA advised that this is the part of the agenda where he presents questions that have been raised by the public to the Chief Constable and his team.

FA stated that he has received an email from a Councillor in Central Bedfordshire asking to raise concerns around 101. What improvements are being made to the 101 service and can you provide a brief update on how calls that have come through to 101 that are reporting crime are handled and where the crime is recorded. SB advised that we have some resourcing issues within our Control Room and we have looked at staffing numbers and the process. We are currently recruiting and have an open recruitment campaign going on at the moment to get more people into the control room and we are also supplementing the current staff with some of our own Officers. We have realised that to enable us to meet the expectations of the public, we do need to put some Officers into the control room in the interim whilst new staff get trained, which we have done. We have also been looking at processes and what we have done is, we have recently introduced an interactive





voice response system whereby it helps to manage you as the caller and the nature of your call, by putting that in we have included a priority status in terms of 101 as well so you can go through 101 and you will be prioritised.

Since October 2021, our wait times for 101 have gone considerably down which is excellent news for our members of the public and we are answering 101 calls in less than 5 minutes, previously the average time was in excess of 15 minutes. The 101 priority averages just over 1 minute. Having gone in this morning, bearing in mind it is a busy Monday morning following the storms etc, there was no one waiting in the queues. SB stated that the reassurance he can give to FA and to the Councillor is that we have tackled this challenge on two fronts, one by putting additional resourcing in there and secondly by improving our processes to make sure that we are fit going forward to manage the demand that we face. TR emphasises that we are recruiting Police staff professionals to go into that environment, the staff in the control room are doing an amazing job by providing an important service and wanted to take this opportunity to draw people's attention to this pathway to coming into the Police service.

FA stated that another question is; Can you give us an update on when the new Custody Building is opening, how it is going to be staffed, which non custody staff are going into the building, who will open it and what the snagging arrangements are with the builder. PW confirmed that the build itself is on schedule and it is planned to be completed on the 4<sup>th</sup> March 2022, at that point the builders hand it over to us, we will then walk through the building with staff and estates colleagues to do all of the snagging work so that on the 4<sup>th</sup> April 2022 it goes live for people moving in there. Those who will be moving into the building are Custody and Investigation Officers and staff, they will transition into the building over a number of months, team by team, but in essence there will be a Custody floor and Investigation floor within that building. At the moment, we are asking the Home Secretary to open the building and we are awaiting her response.

We have received a question about Custody staffing levels being low and there are continued delays in vetting. How is this being addressed and when will the levels be brought up to a more suitable standard. SB advised that every day he receives notifications of what the staffing levels look like in Custody for three days in advance so that we can plan in terms of any shortfalls. SB stated that he can reassure FA that we have not and will not ever close Custody because of Custody staffing shortages and can say that with confidence as we have built in some resilience, as we know our Custody levels and staffing resourcing isn't up to level at this time. With our built in resilience, we have trained some officers to be Interim Custody Detention Officers if needed and that is on a 24/7 basis so if at any time we have last minute sickness or matters that mean we are running short, then we have staff who are able to backfill. There are vetting issues but there are three members of staff who have appealed the initial vetting decision, which is subject to review, we have got five new recruits who are going through the vetting stage and in terms of training and



starters, we have one training course starting in March and then the next one in June. Although we are not there now, we have those plans in place and the people in place to get up to number but most importantly, we have got resilience plans to back up any shortages.

FA stated that we have a question around offender management, how is Bedfordshire Police managing persistent and dangerous offenders in the community and is it working. SB advised that we have an Offender Manager Unit within the Force, it has different arms to if for example; Integrated Offender Management people who are on maybe Orders or those who volunteer to go on these schemes, we have also got Sex Offender Management which is a tool that we take full advantage of. We have a very successful unit which is resourced very well with a good structure in place and the focus is really two-fold – one is reducing reoffending which fits in nicely with the Police and Crime Plan in terms of breaking the cycle of reoffending and secondly, it is to deal with those who do reoffend robustly. Bedfordshire is among 12 Forces out of the 43 who is piloting a GPS tagging system or serious acquisitive crime, when certain offenders are released into communities will wear this Tag and what we are able to do is, look at all our crimes and then overlay those people, not just within the local area but wider and check who was in that area, if there was anyone in that area then we can use that as part of the evidence base to investigate further and if needs be, investigate that individual.

SB stated that this came into real use for us in Bedfordshire late last year whereby one individual was released into the community with such a Tag, every day we submitted our crimes in terms of what was occurring and then we got notification that only 6 days after him being released from Prison, he committed a burglary of a Church premises and that enabled us to build up an evidential case, he was arrested, charged and went back to Prison for a further 20 weeks imprisonment and had his licence recalled. On the other side, which is equally important, is reducing reoffending and helping/supporting people to get back their lives. There is an example of an individual who was on our Prolific Intensive Scheme whereby people are given very strict orders that they have to adhere to. The direct feedback from the individual was that there was emphasis on support from both Police and Probation and this individual said that they previously saw the Police as the enemy. We worked with that individual together with our Probation and Criminal Justice Partners and he turned his life around, he went through a whole period of time without offending, hasn't offended since and more importantly he is now on the verge of running a really successful business. He has become self employed as a result of the training he took up whilst he was on this scheme and now he is really thriving, and a family man which is true evidence that if you support people to reduce reoffending they can go on to have really thriving lives. The team do a brilliant job. FA agreed that it goes to show if we can make a small dent in the area that the Offender Management Team work in, it will help to reduce the number of crimes in our county and help to keep more people safe.



FA stated that the last question we have received is, what do the Force do with the information received from Social Media. SB shared that last month the Force opened up a Digital Desk as part of the Force Control Room and despite the issues that team face, we look at what is important to our communities and how people can contact us. Although the aspiration is to have this running 24/7, at the moment because of those resourcing challenges it is operational from 9am – 5pm, Monday to Friday. We have a dedicated Comms and FCC Officer who will monitor social media throughout that time and if there are any crimes reported through that, the FCC operative can pick it up and deal with it, if it is more general enquiries in relation to social media and the Force comms and engagement, our Comms Officer will pick that up. For out of hours, although we have other mechanisms in place such as Webchat and online reporting, social media is picked up retrospectively and we have an IT product called 'Orla' whereby they can look at social media and signpost accordingly. The number of crime reports that come through social media are very low and that is a good news story because of all the work we have done previously and people know exactly where to go to contact and report to us.

FA thanked everyone for their input into this meeting and on behalf of the residents of Bedfordshire would like to thank all staff and Officers who are doing a fantastic job.

**ITEM 13: NEXT AGENDA**

**Date of Next Meeting:**  
31<sup>st</sup> March 2022