



Confident Communities

Taking Forward the Vision

Simon Bullock
Assistant Police and Crime Commissioner

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Purpose

The Commissioner has already set out his vision for Confident Communities. This document builds on that, and is the basis of a first step in informing an open conversation with the public, police and partners to collectively determine the detail of that vision, and start to develop plans for how it can be delivered.

Whilst getting services right for victims forms an integral part of Confident Communities, this work is not included here and will be available in the Commissioner's forthcoming Victims Strategy.

The vision for Confident Communities encapsulates the primary aspects of the Force's and Commissioner's engagement with the public and is centred on three closely aligned areas: communication, community policing and active citizens.

Background

The Commissioner recognises in the recent past ever increasing police strength and neighbourhood based policing were seen as the answer to fighting crime and providing public reassurance. However, as we know only too well in Bedfordshire, the days when this is a sustainable approach are over for the foreseeable future.

It is now some time since we had to move on from the neighbourhood policing model and adopt the threat, harm and risk model. This move has been successful in terms of performance, but it is necessary to consider how some of the strengths of the previous neighbourhood model can be captured to build a strong and effective link between local communities and their police. Hence this confident communities agenda, which seeks to be a 21st century iteration of the Peelian principle that the police are the public and the public are the police.

The combination of the intense resource pressures of recent years and the change in the operational policing model has meant the public perception (and indeed reality) is that the police are less likely to routinely attend lesser crimes. Public consultation has highlighted this concern as a disjoint between the outcomes the police and the public have in mind. Whilst the public do not disagree with the police's stated purpose to 'fight crime and protect the public', they remain unconvinced that it demonstrates an explicit emphasis on customer satisfaction.

The public want police to not only continue to drive up crime and detection performance, but also not lose sight of the things that concern them on a daily basis - like feeling safe in their homes and places of work. This concept of 'feeling safe' has little to do with crime statistics, and everything to do with the quality of service they receive when they come into contact with the police, reassurance and visibility.

Both the Chief Constable and the Commissioner are clear that the same rigour that has been applied to driving up crime and detection performance must now also be applied to improving public satisfaction and confidence.

Why Confident Communities?

The police just aren't interested in my problems. I don't think they take me seriously.

I used to know my local PCSOs by name, but now I hardly ever see them.

They tell me that crime is falling, but things are worse than ever where I live.

I know the cuts have affected the police, but surely we need more police not less.

I think I'd make a good police officer, but my Mum told me I'd be a traitor to my community if I did.

I called the police in the past to pass on information, but nothing happened. I'm not sure I'd bother to do it again.

Because these are commonly held views. Bedfordshire is a comparatively safe place to live and the risk of becoming a victim of crime is low. However, there is a significant gap between perception and reality, not least because of the prominence given to the coverage of crime by the media.

Although data are not available for Bedfordshire, recent national findings¹ show that 58% of the public do not believe that crime is falling, despite the Crime Survey for England and Wales showing that crime was 19% lower in 2012 than in 2006, and 53% lower than in 1995. Furthermore, 51% think violent crime is rising, when in fact it has fallen from almost 2.5m in 2006 to under 2m in 2012.

The Home Office has given forces a central objective to cut crime, and the Home Secretary has stated this will be done by putting our trust in professionals, enhancing transparency and accountability and empowering citizens and communities.

A key element of the police and crime plan is to forge a closer and stronger partnership between local communities and their police. At a time of on-going austerity, this approach will support the force in deploying its diminishing resources as efficiently and effectively as possible. At a time of acute financial pressure such an approach is no longer just desirable, it is essential.

Wider partnership working is also vital as concerns around crime and ASB cannot be solved by the police alone. Public consultation also revealed that one of their primary desires was that different agencies must work more effectively together with them to help build safer communities.

Working in partnership is vital to providing local solutions to local problems. The approach should include statutory, community and voluntary partners, and is central to building a safer Bedfordshire.

The confident communities programme will also support and complement other policies such as preventing crime and early intervention, and improving services for victims. Taken together the work programmes on confident communities and on preventing crime will help deliver fundamental differences to the way policing is delivered across Bedfordshire and help tackle the pathways associated with offending and re-offending.

¹ 'Perils of Perception.' Ipsos MORI for the Royal Statistical Society and King's College London (July 2013)

Outcomes

Building confident communities is not an end in itself but a means to an end. So we will not be chasing an elusive and nebulous target. Instead there will be a strong focus on outcomes:

Confident communities are safer communities. They will experience lower levels of crime and ASB, and will not only be safe, but feel safe (their fear of crime will be low).

Confident communities have confidence and trust in the agencies that serve them. They would recommend their friends and relatives to use public services.

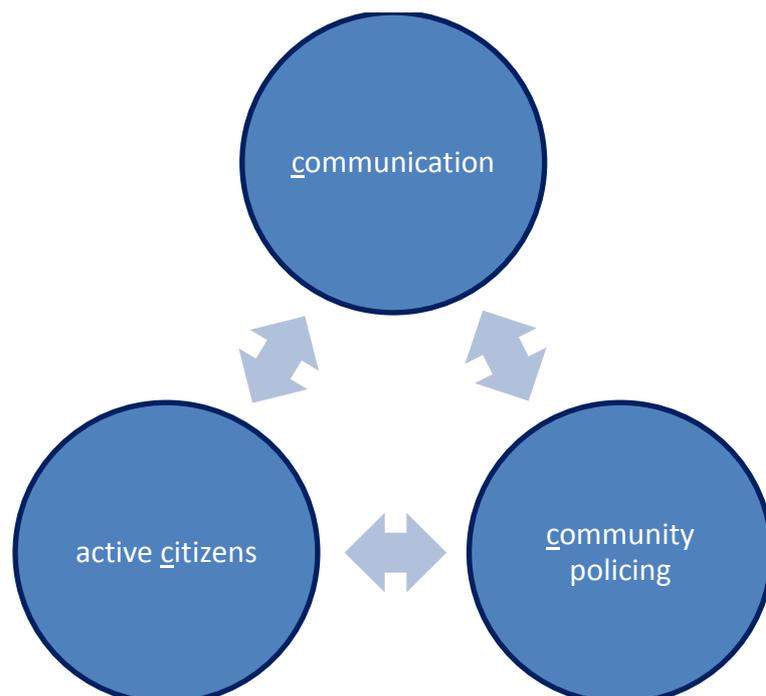
Confident communities are informed. They know the true picture of what is happening in their communities, are comfortable with their access to the police and happy to engage where necessary.

Confident communities are resilient. They are more resistant to intimidation, and help the police create a hostile environment for crime and criminality.

Confident communities have high but realistic expectations that are met consistently. They are critical friends that can offer constructive challenge where needed, but they are also realistic, recognising the challenges the police face, and judging them fairly.

Confident communities support the aims of the police. They will pass on intelligence or report previously under-reported categories of crime, and encourage others to do the same.

Confident communities are made up of active citizens. Their most informed and engaged members will take the next step and actively participate in supporting the police by being problem solvers that take on some responsibility themselves to help strengthen their communities through 'watch' schemes or through other volunteering opportunities.



Delivering Confident Communities

The confident communities programme is the golden thread that will be at the heart of our work. It will exist in the space where there are opportunities to develop closer working relationships between the public and the police. It is not a single initiative. It is based on Peelian principles.

Broadly, the programme has three strands: communication, community policing and active citizens. The following are not definitive lists, but examples of practical steps that could be taken to support delivery of this vision for confident communities:

Communication

Confident communities are informed, engaged and comfortable with their access to the police. They understand the true picture of what is happening in their communities, the roles and remit of the PCC and the force, and recognise the pressures the police are under.

“Make every contact count.” This is recognition that the public are the greatest crime fighting tool that the police have. The goal is a two-way flow of information that demonstrates the value of this contact to both parties on all occasions (you said, we did).

The kinds of activity that can help deliver this strand are:

- Embody the firm, fair and friendly ethos and make sure that every contact counts
- Look for opportunities to provide public reassurance, build confidence and challenge flawed perceptions of crime that cause fear (press releases, Ringmaster, social media, papers, radio and TV, newsletters and other partner communication)
- Consult with the public to better understand their concerns, issues and solutions
- Ensure public confidence in the wider CJS is addressed by involving our CJS partners in a coherent communications plan – including success stories
- Promote an easier way of passing non-urgent information (including third party reporting), taking visible action where possible and providing feedback by default)
- Improve delivery of Op Vision by maximising best practice from across the county, and making better use of marketing and awareness materials
- Continue to address victim satisfaction and inform victims about the progress of investigations (including Track My Crime)
- Embed the PCC as the Victims Champion (increase victims calls, monitor/address victim satisfaction data)
- Recognise that things can go wrong (dip sample complaints and address concerns)
- Identify tracking indicators around customer satisfaction over time to identify areas of improvement or best practice

Community Policing

The police can build confident communities by delivering a service that meets public expectation. A service that is not only focused on driving improvements in crime and detection but also in customer satisfaction by tackling 'lower' level issues like ASB.

“Policing that sees itself through the eyes of the public.” Fundamentally, the public want policing to look and feel different. They are more concerned with cultural change than with minor differences in crime and detection rates. The intention is to build on what works, with evidence-based and needs-led solutions matched to local communities. Improving the diversity of the force and returning to some of the strengths of the neighbourhood policing model are key steps in securing greater community confidence.

The kinds of activity that can help deliver this strand are:

- Act on the recognition that a disjoint exists in the minds of many members of the public between police aims and public wants
- Acknowledge that police culture is currently performance driven, not customer driven
- Consider qualitative and customer focused indicators in assessing good performance, not just existing 'hard' measures
- Continue strong focus on cutting crime and improving detections, coupled with recapturing some of the best practice elements of the previous neighbourhood policing model that can help enhance the link between the public and the police
- Community engagement that prioritises building confidence in others, e.g. advocacy, guidance and support services who work with people and groups that traditionally may lack confidence in the police
- Extend the use of third party reporting, particularly around hate crime and domestic abuse, and ensure close working links so information can be passed on and actioned
- Move towards a wider police workforce that more closely resembles and can more easily empathise with the community which it polices, for example by increasing the diversity of cadets, specials and other volunteers (e.g. school junior cadet schemes)
- Monitor workforce mix and signals (staff associations, monitor all complaints, ETs)
- Consider positive action and/or other schemes as part of decisions on direct entry
- Return to a more static community based role for PCSOs, with less churn so that officers will have the opportunity to build relationships with the community
- Recognise and communicate that rural and urban areas will require different policing
- Increase the number of special constables and introduce parish-based specials
- Take steps to more fully integrate the range of community safety volunteers and formalise links to the police through service level agreements or similar

Active Citizens

We can inform citizens by enhancing their access to information, engage them by creating opportunities to exercise influence, and empower them through active participation that allows them to play their part in making a difference to their communities.

“Policing done with communities, not to them.” Britain has a proud history of policing by consent, and community volunteers have long been an indispensable part of the wider policing family. ‘Watches’ sit at the heart of active citizenship, and encourage a proactive, intelligent and innovative community offer that can augment the police response.

The kinds of activity that can help deliver this strand are:

- Support (including financially) and strengthen Neighbourhood, Street and Speed Watch by bringing together their administration and management where possible
- Undertake a comprehensive review and mapping process that will determine areas of best practice across the county, and potential locations for new schemes
- Develop a package of support, including all aspects from start to finish that can enable any citizen with the necessary skills and enthusiasm to contribute to local policing aims
- Encourage diversity amongst watch members that better reflects the local community
- Refocus watches on core purposes that are aligned to local policing/comm safety aims
- Embed problem solving methodology within watches to build an enhanced network of trusted sources that can provide actionable community intelligence by identifying patterns, and provide support thereby decreasing the need for a police response
- Review against outcomes and continuously improve to aid on-going innovation
- Agree service level agreements or similar between watches, CSPs, OPCC and the police to ensure sustainable high functioning and monitor accordingly
- Raise awareness of watches with town and parish councils and local authorities
- Consider alignment with related watch schemes and with other related organisations
- Explore scope to enhance watches, for example by publicising local success (visible justice, community payback), offering situational crime prevention advice, providing an initial community-led response to low-level ASB, being a contact point for third party crime reporting, or by linking to existing activity (Op Vision, community ‘tidy ups’, etc).
- Liaise with statutory partners to determine opportunities for brigading together different frontline services, and augmenting with volunteers to help sustain the impact of confident communities
- Liaise with wider community and voluntary partners to seek opportunities to pool resources for mutual gain