



21st March, 2019

Dear Friends

One week on from the appalling and cowardly attacks in Christchurch, which have shaken a nation and produced the worldwide wave of revulsion which I entirely share as Bedfordshire's Police and Crime Commissioner, I am delighted to report to you that no increase in hate crime or incidents of retaliation has been seen in our own county in the interim, which is a measure of both the relationships we have built here and of the effectiveness of your police service.

I am extremely proud of the response of Bedfordshire Police in relation to its communities. Last week, rightly, the operational lead of Bedfordshire Police, Chief Constable Jon Boutcher, who is also the national lead in UK policing concerning race and diversity, was front and centre in our response; replying to many members of our Muslim communities to provide reassurance, as the director of operational delivery in policing here, ensuring that a greater degree of visibility was provided with immediate effect to worshippers at mosques throughout the county, with increased patrols and attendance at mosques themselves.

It now falls to me, as the strategic lead for policing, to confirm the strategy that provides protection for our communities around the clock; I sit in governance of the Eastern Region Special Operations Unit which covers a seven force area from the northern tip of Norfolk to the southernmost tip of Kent and chair its board. I can, therefore, state with total truthfulness as I see the evidence every single quarter of the year that, here in the East, officers have been continuously involved in the scrutiny of Extreme Right Wing activity to prevent, disrupt, and prosecute against this poison with focus and determination wherever it has occurred. It has not taken an atrocity overseas to direct that activity, which is given absolutely equal status with that to halt other forms of radicalisation.

I have not spoken of this before as I suspected that this might have been seen as an attempt by me to grab headlines in the context of last week's events and the way in which they were being covered by the mainstream national media, which would have been totally untrue but entirely unacceptable in the context of this tragedy. I feel our communities do now need this reassurance, however, concerning absolutely genuine policing activity of the type which, of course, takes place invisibly, away from public view.

As a woman in a political role - although I refuse to bring national or local politics into policing - I have been enormously impressed by the way the New Zealand Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, has captured the spirit of what we here in Bedfordshire work so hard to achieve in terms of unity and tolerance in her insistence that New Zealand is the home of the Muslim population who have been targeted and that "they are us".

Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire

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Every one of our communities, whatever their faith, culture, age or other demographic are “us” too, here in this county, and we must not allow anyone to use their own agenda to preach hate against any community - or individual, whatever they think of them - or they de-stabilise this for every single one of us.

All very best regards

Kathryn

Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire

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