



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

30th June 2022

Attending:	Festus Akinbusoye, Police Crime Commissioner - OPCC (FA)
	Garry Forsyth, Chief Constable – Force (GF)
	Trevor Rodenhurst, Deputy Chief Constable - Force (TR)
	Sharn Basra, Assistant Chief Constable – Force (SB)
	Phil Wells, Chief Finance Officer – Force (PW)
	Anna Villette, Interim Chief Executive – OPCC (AC)
	Gavin Chambers, Chief Finance Officer – OPCC (GC)
	Katie Beaumont, Transparency Manager - OPCC (KB)
	Rachel Glendenning, Staff Officer - Force (RG)
	Gemma McCormack, Executive Assistant – OPCC (GM)

ITEM 9 – OPCC UPDATES

9.1 PCC Updates

FA welcome everyone to the public section of the meeting.

GF updated regarding EDT and advised that he has written to the Chief Executive of Central Bedfordshire Council to express concerns and highlight a number of examples where the provision from our perspective has not been at the required level. SB has had some very useful conversations with the Directors of Children’s services for the 3 Local Authorities and we understand that this is a priority for them, and they are very keen to progress this with us to address the concerns. SB updated regarding young children in Custody and the appropriate adult provision. SB advised that a pilot will be started tomorrow which has been part funded by the OPCC in conjunction with the three Local Authorities to make sure we have dedicated resources and availability for out of hours to provide that important function of appropriate adult for youths who have not got that support. We will report in due course on how that is going.

9.2 Force Activity Against the Police and Crime Plan – Spotlight 2

TR update in terms of the Police and Crime Plan for recruitment and retention, this maps across with the Forces Annual Plan Control Strategy. TR referred to the report and covered some headlines from within the report.

We have the Police Degree Apprenticeship which is a 3 year programme where individuals join policing, get paid as an Officer and at the end of that 3 years end up with a degree in policing. There is a Degree Holder Programme which is where you already have a degree and you come in and that decreases that period to 2 years of training. There is a third option that is currently being worked on to pilot in September which is a pre joined degree which shortens that timeframe as you will come in with a specific degree that is directly relevant to policing. In addition to that we have had an extension to the College of Policing which is the traditional method of recruiting whereby you come in, get a few weeks in a classroom, get some training and then competence levels are checked on the job and that is the initial Police learning and development programme which is



running. Very similar to that we have the Accelerated Detective Programme which focusses on investigation and individuals on that do the initial investigators exam in the final year of their training. As you can see there are many entry routes there for individuals looking to join the service right now and we are seeking to maximise all of those pathways into the Organisation.

If you look at the 3 years up to the end of March 2022 we had 581 individuals join Bedfordshire Police and 537 of those were new individuals into Policing and the balance was made up of people either transferring to us or re-joining having left for a period of time.

For the period 2021/2022 we recruited 173 Officers, we are funded to reach a head count of 1456 by the end of the financial year, which is 45 more than what our head count was at the start of this financial year because although we had that to recruit we over recruited above our target last year however, we do have 141 and we expect to leave which means we need to recruit 186. In terms of those expected to leave, the vast majority of that is retirement but we will have people who join and then decide that policing is not for them. Our current workforce plan is that we are aiming to increase our head count to 1,501 Officers. Our actual target is 208 Officers this year and as of mid-May we had 151 at various stages of the recruitment process but the reality is that we need to have between 500 – 600 applicants in our pipeline between June and September. We have a number of transferees and so far we have had 5 Officers transfer to us for this calendar year. It is well publicised that the Met have a financial incentive for people to come to them at the moment and that is a challenge for us and how other Forces respond to that will equally be a challenge.

In terms of retention which is equally as important as bringing people in, we have our 30+ scheme which is Officers on the earlier Police provision which allow them to retire after 30 years with a final salary pension. We have a provision where they can actually take part of their pension and then come back into policing and we have had a number of people take that up which we are promoting as we want to retain the experience and skills. In section 3.1 of the report this highlights a number of areas that we have in place to support with retention.

We have pressures in Occupational Health as this was built before uplift and we are having to mitigate some of that by providing outsourcing some occupational health support. The Director for that services is looking at ways to bolster this provision.

In January 2023 we will be at 414 students which equates to 28% of all of our Officers which places a huge demand on our other Officers to support them which will be a very challenging time.

We do an exit interview with every leaver so that we can understand why it is that they are leaving but obviously the key is to try and get to those who we assess as being at risk of leaving so that we can put interventions in place. In the last 12 months we had 7 students dismissed and 38 left for a mixture of reasons ranging from their pay, mental health, generally not liking it, stress and the workload. In addition to all the things we have in place to support those in the workplace we have looked at the financial provision as well within the rules for the Southeast provision and we have made some adjustments there to support our Officers but clearly our budget is focussed to improve public service.

In the report it states recommendations from the HMIC for some things that we need to do better which is the database for the skills set that all of our Officers possess and that sits within the collaborated space as we have Officers in collaboration and that is something along with the other two DCC's that TR is going to be pressing



that we get in place and get right behind because all of the languages and different skills that our people possess, we know that he have got that its just that it isn't at hand at a really effective database in a way that we would like it to be.

In terms of representation you know that we are one of the most represented Forces of the communities that we serve and the current headline figures are – 10% of our Officers are from our black, Asian and ethnic minority communities, 23% of our PCSO's and 6% of our staff. What we do know is the percentages are much higher in terms of our recruitment and we look at leavers vs recruitment you can expect that to change in a positive direction.

At the final section of the report there are some very good initiatives that we are doing there, positive action and educational focus, positive action in community engagement forums, our women of colour in policing programme and the career ready programme – we are leading the way Nationally on that and Bedfordshire have hosted National forums in relation to that and we have had our Force cohort of individuals through the career ready programme. The other area to promote is Luton 6th Form College, we are in partnership with them and the Students undertaking the Criminology Course.

FA thanked TR and agreed there are many positive areas within the report. FA agreed the area of concerns is the number of students being in place by January 2023, this is positive but raises challenges for the Force, GF shared that the Force is looking at what we need to do to refine some of the operating model at the moment so that we can accommodate all of those student officers in a more efficient way. We are also looking at the possibility of if we can bring to bear a tutor unit so there is a greater degree of care for those individuals and making sure that we can support people as they progress through their student journey. We have spent a lot of time working on the culture of the organisation over the last two years and we have seen some really positive improvements as a result of that, by growing the organisation at such pace there is a fantastic opportunity there to bring in people who have not known a culture such as this.

FA asked regarding the Student Development Officers, we budgeted for these as part of the increment proposed by the Force, do we know how many of them are in place or when we are going to have those in place? GF advised we had 4 but have lost 2 unfortunately, we budgeted in the precept increase that it was going to go up to 6 and we are planning to have those in place by the 31st October 2022. FA asked, will those 6 be sufficient for that number of Student Officers? GF advised that this is why we are looking at what else we can do with potentially a tutor unit.

ITEM 10 – COMMUNITY POLICING

10.1 Community Policing Model Establishment update

PW updated in terms of the numbers, still tracking 61/62 of the 67 Community Hubs and trying to keep it within the 5% vacancy level. We are seeing some vacancies slightly above the 5% at the moment but we have plans in place to bridge that gap fairly quickly. FA asked regarding the PCSO numbers in community at the moment? PW updated there are 2 vacancies at the moment.

FA updated following conversations with some Officers, in terms of the availability of the 62 PC's – it may be worthwhile having a conversation about how when an Officers is away i.e. being on sick leave, how this affects the functionality. TR updated that the numbers are not excessive, there are Officers who get injured or



go off sick in every unit and the Community Team is the most up to strength unit in the Force. A small number not being available can make a huge difference but we are not in a position where we are at the extent where we take something somewhere else.

GF updated regarding the Southeast allowance and said that the Force have looked into the scope around this. What we don't want to do is gets into an arms race and for us it is about the culture of the organisation and making it an inclusive organisation where people feel valued and they have good leadership. The starting salary for Officers is around £22,000 per year, it is not a particularly high salary and a lot of our Officers struggle which is why we have taken some measures that we can realistically afford to address some of those concerns. We have a good welfare provision provided by the Federation where we can access emergency funding for Officers such a 0% interest loans etc. The reality is that you can progress quite quickly through the pay scales now and within 7 years could be a top-level PC which is much closer to a reasonable living wage and one that can be sustained. GF confirmed that we are continuing to monitor this situation ging forward.

ITEM 11 – VOICE OF THE PUBLIC

11.1 Issues Raised to the PCC:

FA asked regarding some concerns raised around illegal encampments in the county, there was the issue in Great Denham recently which then moved on to Sandy. FA asked what the Force position is on illegal encampment but also the response to the new legislation that is in place?

GF explained that the lead Agency with responsibility for traveller encampments is the Local Authority and the Police have a support role in this. We have a very well-defined policy in place and good working relationships with our colleagues in the Local Authorities. One of the powers the Police has is Section 62 which is contingent on the provision of temporary transit sites that we can direct travellers to move to which then mitigates the impact on the settled communities but providing good facilities for the travelling community, which negates some of the human rights consideration and concerns. I have been in discussions with the Local Authorities over the last 5 years regarding us having a dedicated where we can facilitate the Section 62, we are still hampered by the lack of provision of a temporary transit site. SB shared that we have to remember that these are people who, sometimes for genuine reasons move around not just the county but the country and they are entitled to their human rights, equality, privacy and are no different to anyone else. Some of the examples for this county are funerals, people being in Hospital and families attending those who are in Hospital which is why it is important that we understand the actual cases. The Police are 3rd in the hierarchy in the response to this issue, Local Authority being the first and private landowners fill the gap as well. The Local Authorities greatest power is under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and it gives them huge powers as it does legislation to private landowners and they can approach Courts to get those orders in place. Our responsibility is always there in terms of supporting and dealing with any criminality caused by anyone in our society. Every call we get in terms of unauthorised encampments is recorded on our Storm system, we notify the Local Authority and we will attend the location to conduct a site visit, which is important to understand what it is, ideally alongside the LA or landowner. Those incidents are dealt with and reviewed every morning by Community Policing and raised to the Force management meeting, we have a specific operation that covers these elements. We have good and robust processes and mechanisms in place for when we go, inspect and do the site visits. We have to keep in mind that it cannot just be for an eyesore or just for the fact that people don't like having those people there. There has to be an element where there is damage, disruption etc associated to that.



FA asked for clarification that Bedfordshire Police fully intends and plans to enforce the PCSE according to the new guidelines and legislation? SB agreed that we will use all of the legislation available to us. FA advised he had a meeting with some of the residents who were affected by the recent encampment in Bedford, the concern was not so much around the encampment being in place but that there was evidence of crime being committed, antisocial behaviour, violent disorder, criminal damage, threatening language and threats to people etc, video footage was also captured regarding the criminal activity. They felt that the Police only focussed on the fact that they could not evict the travellers and not the crimes. SB advised that any criminality caused by any person in our county will be subject to investigation by Bedfordshire Police. The Community Team are reviewing the incidents but if there is material, evidence or crimes that have been committed and haven't been reported or shared, SB encourages FA and others to share with the Force as, every crime will be subject to an investigation.

FA asked if the Force had any updates in relation to the funeral that took place last year? GF explained that he fully appreciates the concerns people may have, sadly we have limited resource and have to allocate it accordingly. GF assured that 101 or webchat would never be turned off however at times there may be high volumes of calls which may mean it will take longer to get through. We have to make difficult decisions around allocations of resource at times. In relation to the funeral that took place last year, some excellent work was carried out by our Wildlife and Rural Crimes Unit. There was a tenacious investigation as a result of the excellent evidence that was gathered on the day. That investigation spanned across 10 other Police Forces including Police Scotland, with 15 offenders identified. Most of the 15 have now been interviewed and 11 have been summoned to Court. Last week 6 out of the 11 attended Court and pleaded guilty, all were given fines between £200 - £300 plus the costs and surcharge but most importantly. They were all given a 3 year behaviour order and that covers the 7 counties in the eastern region. The 5 outstanding offenders plan to appear in court on the 5th September.

FA asked in relation to the comms around illegal encampments, there was some concerns reported around there not being very clear information from the Force in terms of updates, what was being done etc. Are there any thoughts about how this can be done differently in terms of comms to the public? GF advised that where there are multiple reports of an incident we do put out a comms to advise the public that we are aware of an issue – we provide information on the issue and where to report any concerns/issues. Unfortunately due to the amount of calls we were experiencing we had to close down our digi-desk at the time and due to the demand we had to make that choice. Prioritising the calls and the online reporting had to be the priority that day.

FA asked if there are any plans in relation to the Special Constabulary in terms of the numbers etc? PW updated that the next cohort is coming in August. FA asked regarding the neighbourhood specials who live in a particular location and want to be responsible for policing their neighbourhood? PW advised that there are some issues with the practicalities around this in terms of Parva storage, vehicle capacity etc we are trying to work those through and think the January intake 2023 will be targeting the recruitment in that area.

FA asked regarding the Missing Persons Team, their job is such a difficult one and they do it very well given the level of vulnerability they deal with. FA has been informed regarding the amount of referrals they make to the VERU is not where it could be, are the Force aware of this and what is being done to improve these referrals? SB updated between December, January and February there were 20 referrals that went into VERU and in March, April and May there have been 40 – which has doubled in the space of 6 months. This is great awareness from us in terms of a wider partnership in terms of identifying in terms of potential risk and vulnerability and signposting these people in to the right areas, We have to remember that the VERU is not



the only avenue available. When we have missing children there are two elements where the Police get involved very early in support of our Partners – one is the safe and welfare check, this is not just to check the child is back but to find out why the child left and what support is available to the child and the family, what next in terms of intervention. Thereafter there is a return to home interview that follows a very similar path. The first step is always in conjunction with Children Services which is a strategy meeting and that is where the individuals will be discussed, as they are low level risk, there is then a fortnightly SPOC meeting including internal Police representation such as BOSON missing people teams and community teams, Local Authority and VERU as well as some charitable organisations. There is also Magpan and Serious Youth Violence so if they are not captured by any of those that is when they will go directly into the VERU. It may be seen that our referral into VERU is small but there are lots of avenues in between that get them to the right place.

FA updated regarding a question from the Police and Crime Panel about Disability Identification, is there a plan for HR to complete a deep dive into this area to ensure Officers and staff are supported appropriately? PW advised that there is some clarity around the figures and the figures we are talking about are the ones that are not mandated by individuals and a lot of staff, other than saying 'none' in terms of disabilities choose to use 'prefer not to say'. We can not force people to fill in that part of their personal details as it is not a mandatory requirement, what we do know though is every single Officer and staff member in terms of when they joined the organisation what their disabilities are and whether they are fit to undertake the duties they have been employed to do, and throughout the year through our Occupational Therapy department, where there is a disability identified – we know what that disability is, who it is and what they can and cannot do. The figures that have been passed to the panel are the figures that are based on the non mandatory reporting by individuals.

FA advised that the Panel have also asked regarding long term sick figures which we have provided in the past and they are keen to know what the Force are doing to support Officers who are on long term sick? GF advised that there is a whole range of activity but unfortunately our Occupational Health facility is quite stretched at the moment, we have made some additional investment to try and plug that gap. GF advised that the Force tracks everyday the numbers of Officers who are assaulted on duty and these numbers can be provided if required, we track it through Operation Hampshire and our commitment through Maggie's Law. When Officers are assaulted they have the opportunity to have a conversation with one of the senior Officers in the organisation. PW updated there is a group which is chaired by a Chief Superintendent which meets on a monthly basis to focus on those people who are long term absent from the organisation in terms of ensuring that either they are getting the right level of care that they need in terms of occupational health support or, looking in terms of whether they can continue to be an Officer or staff member with Bedfordshire Police. The long term absent numbers are not high and at the moment we are running with 30 Officers who are long term absent out of 1,400.

FA asked SB regarding the Performance Report which was discussed in the closed section of the meeting, are there any areas SB would like to highlight in this meeting?

- SB updated that we have seen an increase in crime but that is expected as we have had two years of a completely different environment for all of us. Although we have had an increase in crime year to date, that is still below the pre COVID levels. There is some good news as we are still seeing an increase in hidden harm crimes and hidden victims coming forward, for example – we continue the drive around domestic abuse especially for those under represented groups who fall under the radar. We are continuing to see reductions in residential burglary and we see more of these crimes being solved.



- In relation to the control room we have seen in May an increase in both 999 and 101 calls, we will accept all calls and deal with them appropriately but at times there are alternative methods of contact that can be used such as online reporting – this helps us to prioritise where we can and when we should attend.
- We have invested heavily in the Custody Suite at Kempston and we are already seeing the benefits of that, not just those coming in but the efficiency of how they are being dealt with throughout the process.
- We have some key events around the county such as Bedford River Festival – this is great as families will be able to enjoy it but it comes at a weekend where there are competing demands for Policing so we will be well resourced over that whole weekend. There is also the potential for serious violence over the summer months but we are working with our partners to provide a proportionate response for example – at these events people are able to enjoy them, they are reassured by the Policing presence but if there is any criminality where are there ready to deal with it.

Next Meeting: 22nd September 2022