

THE BEAT

Organisations have to adapt when they hit troubled times and policing is no different.

In the face of further funding cuts, we have begun to map out changes that will utilise our resources more effectively in the future. Over the course of two years we have enhanced policing services in many ways - despite the ongoing financial struggle and uncertainty. I am confident that our good judgement and foresight will continue as we negotiate the challenges ahead.



Delivering the Future

Building on the financial theme, last month the Chief Constable and I unveiled our plans for the delivery of policing in Nottinghamshire in the future. Although this was driven by the anticipated funding reductions we face, we know that change can also prompt new and improved ways of working. We have therefore determined to do all that we can to both enhance the way our services are delivered and to become more efficient with our resources. Although our exact position will not be clear until this year's settlement is announced in December, which will be followed by the next Comprehensive Spending Review in 2015, we must act now to safeguard our future and ensure we have the capacity and resilience to meet the ongoing criminal threat in Nottinghamshire.

At the core of the plan is a desire to work with our partners to prevent crime, ensure that standards of service to the public are paramount, offer local policing services that are responsive to public need and ensure policing remains embedded in our communities.

We have faced tough financial challenges for a number of years now but careful budget management has enabled us to deliver over £3m each year to local partnerships for community safety and victims' services. This proves prudent financial management doesn't always equate to a reduction in service levels but can bolster efforts to make the county safer.

The Force is now moving from the design phase of the strategy to implementation and is focusing on how we can improve every area of the business to become more efficient and effective. Regardless of how this work ultimately shapes the Force, the public can be assured that we will use our resources in the best possible way to ensure they receive a universal, consistently high standard of service.

Innovation



On a very positive note, it emerged that we had successfully secured Home Office funding on behalf of the force to invest in new technology and pioneering crime investigation techniques to improve public safety. It follows my bid in the summer to the Government's Innovation Fund on behalf of the Forces which make up the East Midlands Police Collaboration Programme (EMPCP).



The Fund is designed to promote joint working between forces and support improved digital working to drive greater efficiency. A grant worth £2.9m has been awarded for a four-force (Nottinghamshire, Leicester, Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire) interoperable crime and justice platform to improve information sharing and evidence submission between the forces and the criminal justice system as a whole. In addition, funding has also been awarded for a range of projects across all five forces in the programme which incorporates almost £1.7m for body-worn videos to help officers collect evidence of criminality while on frontline duty and £0.4m to support an integrated 'virtual courts system' across the East Midlands, linking all police custody areas, victim suites and all courts and producing considerable savings through reduced prisoner transfers.

Meanwhile, the EMPCP was one of two bids to successfully apply for funding to trial the use of RapidDNA technology which enables DNA profiles to be returned in less than 90 minutes without requiring a skilled technician to operate. Funding of £0.09m has been granted on the condition the East Midlands team collaborates with Lancashire Constabulary, the other successful applicant, during the trial to ensure maximum value for money.

The new technology will advance our evidence-gathering capabilities to bring more criminals to justice, which is good news for the public and the police.

Mental Health Crisis Care Concordat

Health and criminal justice professionals from across Nottinghamshire gathered together for a public signing of a new national document pledging to protect the wellbeing of people experiencing mental health crisis.



The Department of Health's Mental Health Crisis Care Concordat challenges public service providers and third sector organisations to end the injustices of those living with a mental health issue and ensure they receive access to appropriate treatment in the right setting and by the appropriately qualified professional.

A multitude of agencies were present during the symbolic signing of the Concordat in Nottingham on September 25. The event, jointly hosted by myself and all the local Clinical Commissioning Groups, was aimed at identifying how services could be improved in the future and addressed some serious issues including the practice of taking vulnerable people into police custody because of a shortage of professional medical care.

A range of priorities have arisen out of the meeting including the need for a countywide programme to increase awareness and understanding of mental health, the creation of a single point of access for people requiring mental health services, clear processes for referring people to support services and an extension of the Street Triage scheme. This initiative pairs a police officer with a mental health practitioner when responding to people experiencing a mental health crisis. We hope that in the near future we will have someone suitably qualified in the control room so that calls for assistance can be assessed at the point of contact so that people can be helped appropriately and speedily.



Victims' Services

Earlier this month, I took over responsibility for commissioning local support services for victims and witnesses of crime. With funding provided by the Ministry of Justice, I am now tasked with choosing a single provider to deliver the ambitious aims in my Victims' Strategy through a formal tendering process.

Given my new responsibilities, it is an appropriate time to overhaul the current system and enhance the support offered to those who suffer through criminality. The new contract will run from April 1 2015 until March 31 2017 and will provide victims and witnesses of crime with access to round-the-clock practical help and counselling. I have allocated funding to six organisations including Victim Support to continue delivering victims' services until the new financial year.

At the very heart of my vision is a desire to prevent future harm to victims and increase their ability to cope with their experiences.



The new-look service will be delivered in accordance with the Victims' Code and will offer support confidentially and free of charge by locally-based staff and volunteers. It will ensure victims have a single point of contact for their recovery needs to provide clarity as well as ease their path through the justice system.

Child Sexual Exploitation INDEPENDENT REVIEW

Following the emergence of local allegations of historic abuse made about Beechwood and other Nottinghamshire children's homes, I have requested an Independent Review to reassure the public that these very serious matters have been fully investigated. Such a review will inevitably need to follow the full police investigation and I am pleased that the leaders of both the City and County Councils endorse such an approach. I am also in discussion with our local Safeguarding Boards regarding who will be best placed to lead this Review.

The work to protect children and keep them safe is a fundamental element of our society and I believe we owe it to all those who have been cared for in our children's homes to look closely at how these services have been delivered over the years. In my view, an independent review is the only way to do that.

In the meantime I receive on going briefings from the Chief Constable to make sure that I am up to date with the force's progress in these matters and I have been monitoring the development of Operation Daybreak since it began.

Everything possible is being done to ensure that any claim – whether this is historical or current – is fully investigated and will never be swept under the carpet.

Achievements – 2 years on

It is almost two years since I launched my Police and Crime Plan for Nottinghamshire and already we are meeting many of the ambitions I set out - despite our continuing funding troubles.

My pledge to invest in local policing through the recruitment of extra police officers and PCSOs is being delivered and I've also helped to release significant capital funds by using our buildings more effectively and sourcing out joint working/co-location opportunities with our partners.

We have delivered £3.6m of funding this year to local partnerships to improve community safety and victims' services. We've also commissioned vital research into repeat domestic violence, victims' services, and the relationship between police and BME communities. Meanwhile, my Alcohol Strategy which incorporates a number of preventative initiatives is well underway across the county and we're progressing towards a new service for victims and witnesses which will deliver enhanced support and practical help to those who fall victim to crime.

However, I'm well aware that despite these successes there is no room for complacency and there is much work to do in the months ahead to continue to keep Nottinghamshire safe.



In Nottinghamshire vulnerable young women affected by domestic violence are set to receive greater support.

Girls aged 13-17 will get help from community workers to spot the signs of being in a violent relationship.

The support workers will help them to learn how to move on from their situation and to build more healthy relationships in the future.

#localhelpforvictims

Domestic Violence SERVICE PROGRESS

As part of my ambition to improve victims' services, we were able to launch a series of courses last month (September) aimed at helping women cope in the aftermath of domestic abuse. The initiative followed my successful bid for funding from the Ministry of Justice's PCC Competed Fund to cover projects supporting women affected by domestic abuse. We received a total grant of £228,175 of which £125,000 financed the Rights and Recovery project which includes five healthy relationship courses for women survivors in the city and ten in the county.

Women's Aid Integrated Services was awarded the contract to deliver the courses, which were developed in response to the research I commissioned last year investigating what kind of help victims needed. When the project finishes in March next year, the outcomes will be evaluated independently so that lessons learned can be used in the future.

PERFORMANCE UPDATE



As ever we continue to face increasing threats to our performance in the current economic climate. While we appear to be winning the battle in many areas of offending, in others we are beginning to see sustained increases in recorded crime which we are working hard to address.

Performance figures for the Force covering the year to date up to June 2014 show overall crime has risen by 2.42% which represents an additional 577 offences. Disappointingly, violence without injury offences have increased by 28.55% while violence with injury grew by 11.07%.

There is better news for domestic burglary with figures showing a decrease of -10.38% (148 fewer offences). Reductions were also recorded in theft of motor vehicle offences (-27.64%), shoplifting (-2.29%) and theft from person (-37.59%).

It's clear that we have a lot of work to do keep crime at bay. Recent figures show crime in the City of Nottingham is now rising at a rate of 1.1% however there are a number of proactive and reactive police operations underway to address the situation and minimise the impact on the public.

We are under no illusions of the scale of the work ahead, but I am assured that everything possible is being done to protect the public and keep Nottinghamshire communities crime-free.

Community Remedy



Following an extensive consultation exercise to gauge public feeling about alternative punishments to court, we have formerly launched a Community Remedy Document which sets out a variety of options for dealing with low-level offending.

This document, which has been agreed by the Chief Constable – who is now responsible for its implementation, has been heavily influenced by public opinion. Victims will also have a strong input into the remedy decision affecting their case, giving them greater control over their recovery.

Firearms Licensing

The burden of cost on police forces for administering firearms licensing is not a new issue but as budgets continue to be squeezed and the funding gap widens it has become a more urgent area to address. Last month I joined fellow Police and Crime Commissioners in personally writing to Prime Minister David Cameron asking to support an increase in fees.

This year, the cost of firearm licensing in Nottinghamshire is more than £450,000 yet only a portion of this recovered (£56,000 in 2013-14). Fees have not increased since 1 January 2001 yet the cost of processing remains the same. It is difficult to justify such costs for shooting sports when difficult decisions about police priorities – including the loss of police officers – are being made. I hope Mr Cameron takes the necessary action to allow the fee income to be increased.



KEEP ON TALKING

I'm delighted that so many people contact me, with problems, compliments and comments. This is particularly important as I need to be able to listen to your views and learn from them and also know that you can keep up to date with what my Deputy, my team and I are doing.

Whatever I do, I am answerable to you, the electorate. You can contact me at any time to ask questions or put your views across.

You can visit:

www.nottinghamshire.pcc.police.uk

You can follow me:

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