

POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICERS**(Report by the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Service Support))****1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Having considered a report by the Police Community Support Officers' Working Group, the Panel recommend changes to the funding by the Council for the employment of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) in Huntingdonshire.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council approved a memorandum of understanding in 2003 to provide £300,000 per annum to Cambridgeshire Constabulary which enabled the Police to employ additional 14 PCSOs in Huntingdonshire in excess of was available under Home Office funding. Since then, the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance) have monitored the performance of the PCSOs and established a small working group which has met from time to time with the relevant executive councillors and officers. A report by the working group was considered at the last meeting of the Service Support Panel.
- 2.2 The Panel have reiterated consistently that they value the contribution that PCSOs make in providing reassurance to the public by being a visible presence on the streets. Nevertheless Members sometimes have found difficulty in assessing the impact of PCSOs in the wider context of community safety and Police activities. With the development of neighbourhood policing teams, the Panel have acknowledged that this should be addressed by the new monitoring and reporting arrangements and closer liaison with local communities.

3. FUNDING FOR POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICERS

- 3.1 The Council's contribution substantially funded 14 of the 31 PCSOs on the Police's Central Division establishment in 2005/06. The balance was funded from a combination of sources but the Panel have been informed that new funding streams are becoming available from central government under the Neighbourhood Police Fund which will support additional PCSO recruitment. Subject to formal confirmation, it now seems probable that funding for an additional 109 PCSOs will be announced in the current year, rising to 178 in 2007/08.
- 3.2 It is likely that the initial allocation will favour Southern Division, which is piloting the neighbourhood policing initiative. Approximately 25% will be allocated to Central Division and it has been assumed (for forecasting purposes) that these will be divided equally between Huntingdonshire and Fenland.

3.3 The Panel are conscious of the Council's financial position and the need to achieve reductions in net expenditure to meet the budgetary targets contained in the Financial Strategy. The availability of Home Office funding should enable the Council to withdraw its financial contribution to the deployment of PCSOs in the District without any reduction in the number of officers employed. Transferring existing staff currently funded by the Council into posts funded from the Neighbourhood Policing Fund will also avoid the Constabulary in the start-up costs (approximately £3,400 per officer) associated with new recruits.

3.4 A phased approach to the withdrawal of funding is considered equitable in that this should enable the retention of existing PCSO levels commensurate with the roll out of the new funding available to the Constabulary. Although this will be dependent upon formal confirmation of the nature of the Home Office funding, the Panel have been informed that it is likely that the Council's contribution can be reduced in the current year to £215,000 and withdrawn entirely in 2007/08.

4. **ENSURING VALUE FOR MONEY**

4.1 Central to the role of PCSOs is reducing the fear of crime and demonstrating a visible presence. To ensure that these objectives continue to be met, the Panel have looked at ways in which their activities can continue to be monitored but without creating additional tasks for the Police which might detract from their existing workload.

4.2 In that respect Annex 1 represents an annual review of the activities of the PCSOs in Huntingdonshire in 2005/06. However the Panel suggest that the quarterly crime report (as set out in Annex 2) would be of more relevance to the great majority of Members and would avoid the necessity for the Police to draft a separate report on the activities of PCSOs for the Council .

5. **CONCLUSION**

5.1 The value of the Police Community Support Officers in providing high visibility policing is acknowledged and welcomed by the Panel but they view the new central funding as an opportunity for the Council to achieve budgetary savings without affecting standards of service in the District. The Cabinet will be updated at their meeting as to the size and timing of the new funding and its precise impact on the phasing of the reduction in District Council funding for PCSOs.

6. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1 The Panel therefore

RECOMMEND

(a) that the Cabinet withdraw the District Council's funding for the employment of PCSOs in Huntingdonshire as soon as possible, commensurate with there being no reduction in the number of officers that were financed by the Council; and

- (b) that the Cabinet arrange for copies of the quarterly Community Safety Partnership report on crime in Huntingdonshire to be circulated to all Members of the Council.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Report of PCSO Working Group to Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) meeting held on 13th June 2006.

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Huntingdonshire Police Community Support Officers

Annual Review 2005-2006

Background

Police Community Support Officers are part of the wider police family and contribute to the policing of neighbourhoods, primarily through high visibility patrols with the purpose of reassuring the public, increasing orderliness in public places and being accessible to communities and partner agencies working at a local level. PCSOs focus on tackling low level anti-social behaviour and public nuisance. They are given a range of enforcement powers to address issues such as disorder, underage drinking, cycling on the footpath and abandoned vehicles. They can also issue fixed penalty notices to address dog fouling, anti-social driving and drunk and disorderly behaviour. PCSOs are intended to support police officers and to release police officers from tasks that do not require their extensive range of skills and powers.

One of the key benefits about PCSOs is that they do not generally get drawn away from their patrols and reassurance work to deal with other police matters, as is often the case with uniformed police officers. PCSOs spend a higher proportion of their time on visible patrol than police officers and as a result they tend to be identified by and with the communities they work in. PCSOs have the time to provide a quality service in dealing with low level disorder and offences and engage positively with the public.

Police Community Support Officers training is tailored to their specific role and is therefore different to that provided to police officers.

On appointment, a PCSO will attend a 4 week initial training course, which includes:

- understanding their role
- how and when to use their powers
- the structure and principles of the Service
- customer care and service delivery
- community and diversity issues
- multi agency partnership working
- use of technology and systems
- personal safety and first aid

PCSOs in Huntingdonshire

There are 23 PCSOs based in Huntingdonshire covering rural and urban areas. A list of the names of the PCSOs and the areas that they cover is attached.

PCSOs are involved in a wide range of duties. In order to give an idea of the breakdown of time PCSOs in Huntingdonshire spent on each of the duties, the police agreed to ask the PCSOs to record their duties onto time sheets. A break down of the activities that PCSOs have been involved in over the year 2005/2006 in Huntingdonshire is as follows:

Duty	Total hours spent on duty for all Hunts PCSOs	Approx percentage of total time spent on each duty
High visibility patrols	9316	52%
Abstracted (incl training)	3658	20%
Crime related enquiry	1708	9.5%
Vehicle related enquiry	348	2%
Anti-social behaviour	1070	6%
Meetings	886	5%
Other operational activities	554	3.1%
Named police operation	154	0.9%
Not defined	105	0.59%
Dog fouling	8	0.04%
Light duties	8	0.04%

NB. This data is taken from timesheets filled in manually by PCSOs which are then submitted to HDC and entered on to an Access database by HDC staff. The data is approximate. NB percentage do not total 100% due to rounding and allowance for rest and leave.

The analysis shows that the duty which PCSOs spend the most time on is high visibility patrols. Such patrols help to provide reassurance to the community and reduce the fear of crime.

The Huntingdonshire Annual Survey 2006 has shown really positive results in terms of how safe residents feel in their neighbourhood with 90.9% of residents feeling very or fairly safe, an increase of 6.6% from 2005 (84.3%) The high visibility of PCSOs in neighbourhoods may have been a contributory factor in this increase in feeling of safety.

Since October 2004 PCSOs have issued 1,318 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) for traffic and disorder related issues.

What do PCSOs do?

Lyndsey and Gemma are PCSOs who work as part of the Yaxley neighbourhood policing team, and cover Sawtry, Alconbury and the surrounding area. They have answered a few frequently asked questions to try to explain a bit more about their role.

What is a police community support officer?

The role of the PCSO is to help with the policing of neighbourhoods. We wear a highly visible uniform, which is reassuring to the public. We patrol on foot, and our presence helps to improve orderliness in public places. The work that we do enables regular police officers to make more effective use of their specialist skills and training – tackling crime and making communities safer.

What do you do?

We deal with incidents such as anti-social behaviour, low level crime, for example vandalism, so police officers can focus on more serious crimes, house to house enquires, taking statements and crime reports. We do high visibility reassurance patrols and gather intelligence.

What powers do you have?

Our powers include

- Issuing fixed penalty notices on selected offences for people over the age of 18 for example cycling on the footway, dog fouling or litter and issuing penalty notices for disorder on selected offences for people over the age of 18, for example drunk in a public place or wasting police time.
- We confiscate alcohol from people under the age of 18 and tobacco from those under the age of 16.
- We enter and search premises to save life and limb or prevent serious damage.
- We remove abandoned vehicles.
- We can take the names and addresses of people acting antisocially and can detain a person for up to 30 minutes pending the arrival of a constable.

How do you feel you help the people in the district?

By being the eyes and ears of the police, people are able to feel safe and secure. We offer a friendly face and people often tell us that it is nice to see us on the streets. We work closely with members of the public, businesses, organisations like the local council and agencies such as Huntingdonshire Business Against Crime (HBAC) and key stakeholders within the community in many ways. These include reassurance patrols, or we may be asked to attend community meetings or provide back up during special operations.

What do you enjoy most about being a police community support officer?

We enjoy the interaction that we have with all sections of the community and the work that we do within schools like safety talks on cycle safety or personal safety.

What sort of things do people say about you? They say things like *“It’s nice to see you around. It makes me feel a lot safer knowing you are helping our community.”*

The PCSOs have become well known members of the community in many areas across the District. Their support and participation in initiatives and projects to address crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour has been well recognised.

A day in the life of a PCSO

Monday 23rd January 2006

I came on duty at 08.00 hrs this morning.

I make my first job to put intelligence on that I gathered the previous day. This intelligence is about Youths on my beat. We have a big youth problem in Godmanchester and find it useful to gather intelligence on their movements and clothing. I then have a look at the incidents that have happened over the last 24hrs on my Beats and look at Briefing notes. I also check 'Crimefile' (a system that records crimes) for any new tasks that I may have allocated to me.

08.45 I set off to do some high visible patrols on my bike in the Godmanchester area. I make my first port of call West Street as at this time of the morning there is a high volume of traffic and there is a one-way slip road at this location which frequently causes problems when people ignore the sign!

09.20 I receive a call on my work mobile from the Clerk to the Town Hall in Godmanchester. She has just arrived for work at the Town Hall to see that they have been broken into over night. She is very distressed. As I am only around the corner, I am there within minutes. My first task is to calm the lady so I called one of her work colleagues to join us there. I note down the point of entry and make sure nothing is disturbed in any way. I report to the Force Control Room and request Scenes of Crime Officers.

I also raise a 301 (an incident report form which is faxed through to the Crime Management Unit so they can allocate a crime number) and I take a statement from the Town Clerk. The Town Hall has its own CCTV so I seize the tape for possible evidence.

11.30 I make my way back to Huntingdon Police Station where I fax off the 301 and book the tape into the Property Office.

Then I break for Lunch.

12.30 I set off on my bike again to do more high visible patrols in Godmanchester for two hours.

14.30 I then have a meeting at Pathfinder House in Huntingdon with the Anti Social Behaviour Co-ordinator for Huntingdonshire District Council. Our meeting is about which youths we currently have on ABC's. An ABC is an Acceptable Behaviour Contract used for youths who are found to be persistently acting in an anti social manner. The contract is drawn up between the youth, the parents, the Anti Social Behaviour Co-ordinator at Huntingdonshire District Council and the Police. It is one step away from an ASBO. The Anti Social Behaviour Co-ordinator and I discuss each ABC individually and decide when to visit each one and review their behaviour.

16.00 hrs I return to Huntingdon Police Station and book myself off on the radio as it's time for me to go home!

So what have the PCSOs been involved in during 2005 – 06?

Here are just a few examples of the type of initiatives that the PCSOs have been involved in:

PCSO Carol Corn at St Neots arranged for a group of older residents to visit Great Staughton School and talk to children about their experiences of when they were younger. The idea behind the 'Ageism' project was to breakdown perceived barriers between young and old and for both young and old to realise that they can live together without feeling intimidated by each other's behaviours. The response to this project from both communities was very positive and Carol is looking to expand it into other schools in the St Neots area.

In the Huntingdon sector two of the Police Community Support Officers recently completed the safety zone week. Over 400 children aged 9 and 10 years attended Huntingdon Fire Station where they took part in a multi-agency interactive safety project. The messages the children received were all about keeping safe both inside and around the home. A similar project was run in Ramsey in November 2005 where again the two local Community Support Officers played a pivotal role.

In St Ives two dispersal areas have been introduced within the town to try and curb anti-social behaviour. It is recognised that in addition to policing these, diversionary activities should also be considered. To that end a football match is being organised between the local police and some of the youngsters that will hope to breakdown some of the barriers. PCSO Drage is also hoping to organise an event for later in the year that involves the youngsters who are car enthusiasts. In addition PCSO Davis has been working with other agencies on improvements to the skateboard park area of St Ives.

Police Community Support Officers by Sector

Sector	Name	Areas Covered	PoliceStation
Huntingdon (Including North Huntingdon Area)	PCSO Joanna Grant	Oxmoor and Hartford	Huntingdon
	PCSO Jessica Drew		Huntingdon
	PCSO Angie Wilson	Huntingdon Town Centre, Old Huntingdon, Stukeley Meadows	Huntingdon
	PCSO Debbie Thorburn	Godmanchester Brampton	Huntingdon
	PCSO Shiralee Freeman		Huntingdon
	PCSO Gill Goodfellow	Yaxley, Farcet, Holme	Yaxley
	PCSO Barry Chamberlain	Stilton, Caldecote, Denton, Norman Cross, Folksworth, Washingley, Morborne, Alwalton, Chesterton, Elton, Sibson, Stibbington, Water Newton, Haddon, Wansford	Yaxley
	PCSO Lindsey Simkin	Abbots Ripton, Alconbury, Alconbury Western, Barham, Woolley, Brington, Molesworth, Buckworth, Bythorn, Keyston, Catworth, Covington, Conington, Easton, Ellington, Glatton, Grafham, Great Gidding, Little Gidding, Hamerton, Kings Ripton, Leighton Bromswold, Old Weston, Sawtry, Spaldwick, Stow Longa, The Stukeleys, Upton, Coppingford, Winwick, Woodwalton	Yaxley
PCSO Gemma Clark	Yaxley		
St Neots	PCSO Reeve	Buckden, Great Paxton, Stirtloe, Diddington, The Offords, Toseland, Yelling, Abbotsley, Waresley, Great Gransden	St Neots
	PCSO Newman		St Neots
	PCSO Davis	Eynesbury, Eynesbury Hardwicke	St Neots
	PCSO Poole		St Neots
	PCSO List	St Neots Town Centre, Priory Beat	St Neots
	PCSO Corn	Kimbolton, Little Paxton, Broughton, Southoe, Midloe, Hail Weston, Great Staughton, Tilbrook, Perry, Dillington	St Neots
PCSO Bachman	Eaton Socon, Eaton Ford	St Neots	
PCSO Cruickshank	Currently on light duties	St Neots	
St Ives and Ramsey	PCSO Tiernan	Ramsey St Marys, Ramsey Heights, Ramsey Forty-Foot, Ramsey Mereside, Pondersbridge, Bury, Great and Little Graveley, Wistow, Upwood	Ramsey
	PCSO Drage	Burleigh Hill estate and Somersham Road Industrial Estate	St Ives
	PCSO Anderson	St Ives Town centre	St Ives
	PCSO Carr		St Ives
	PCSO Docking	Warboys	Ramsey
PCSO Davis	Bluntisham, Colne, Earith, Needingworth, Somersham, Houghton and Wyton, Fenstanton, Hemingford Grey, Hemingford Abbots, Woodhurst, Broughton, Hilton, Oldhurst	St Ives	

Huntingdonshire Community Safety Partnership Quarterly Crime Report Summary (Excerpts)

January 2006 to March 2006

Strategy Targets¹ (all by end 2007/08)

Headline PSA1 Target

- 16% reduction in British Crime Survey Comparator crimes

Vehicle Crime

- 20% reduction in theft of vehicles
- 20% reduction in theft from and vehicle interference
- 10% reduction in malicious fires targeting vehicles

ASB

- 25% reduction in criminal damage
- 5% reduction in people who think that ASB is a 'fairly big' or 'very big' problem
- 10% reduction in other malicious fires

Shop Theft

- 30% reduction in theft from shops

Dwelling Burglary

- 15% reduction in dwelling burglary

Violence Against the Person

- 15% reduction in common assaults and wounding

Domestic Violence

- Increase reporting of domestic violence to the police by 10%
- Decrease the proportion of domestic violence incidents that are repeats to 10%

Progress

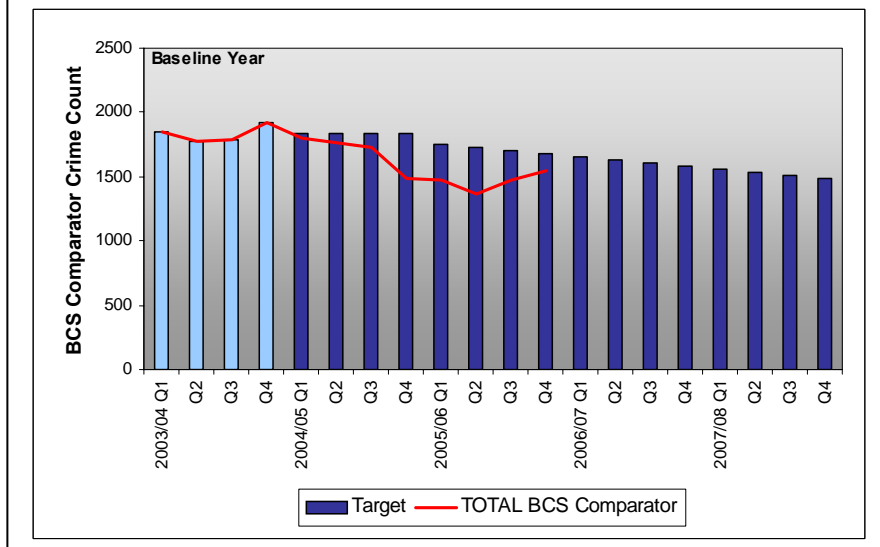
✓
✓
✓
-
✗
-
-
✓
✓
✓
✗
Not available

Key	
CDRP not on track to meet target	✗
CDRP Neither significantly on or off track	-
CDRP on track to meet target	✓

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¹ Based upon content of current strategy document

Figure 1: BCS Comparator Crime: Progress Against Target



VEHICLE CRIME

Theft of Vehicles

There has been an 8.9% decrease in the total number of vehicle thefts over the last twelve months, compared to the previous year.

Geographical Analysis:

As noted in previous quarters the Wards of Huntingdon North, Yaxley and Farcet and St Neots Eynesbury remain the hotspot areas for vehicle thefts. The biggest increases since last quarter have been in Yaxley and Farcet, and Huntingdon North, which are both up by 50% compared to the figures for Oct – Dec 2005. From a broader perspective, the Ward average for the whole of Huntingdonshire remains low (2.6 recorded crimes). This suggests that the majority of problems are centred around a few specific wards.

Theft From Vehicle and Vehicle Interference

Over the last quarter Huntingdonshire has experienced a slight increase (8%) in the number of 'Thefts from Vehicles' and Vehicle Interferences' recorded by the police. Overall, however, the Partnership has experienced a reduction of 33% on the baseline year.

Geographical Analysis of Theft From Vehicle and Vehicle Interference:

St Ives East, St Neots Eynesbury and the Huntingdon areas continue to record most incidents. Of particular note are significant increases in Huntingdon North (up 210%) and Huntingdon East (up 91%) compared to the previous quarter. These increases are likely to be related to a recent series of vehicle offences identified by the police in these areas.

Long-term hot spot, St Ives East ward has recorded 17 offences between January and March of this year, this is actually a 43% decrease on the preceding three months. The police have been actively working on crime prevention schemes specifically targeted on vehicle crime hotspots in some of these areas and this may have contributed to these reductions.

THEFT FROM SHOPS

There were 107 'Thefts from Shops' between January and March 2006, bringing the total for the year to 446 recorded offences. This is a 5.3% decrease on the 2004/05 (471 offences). As expected the majority of offences occurred in the wards of Huntingdon West (including the town centre), Huntingdon North and the St Neots' areas of Eynesbury and Priory Park.

DWELLING BURGLARY

There has been an overall reduction in Dwelling Burglaries over the last twelve months of 10.7%, based on the previous year. The greatest reduction has been in 'Distraction Burglaries' with 13 more recorded offences in 2004/05 than 2005/06. This may be a reflection on recent initiatives involving the police and local agencies, aimed specifically at crime prevention and raising public awareness in particularly vulnerable areas.

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

The changes in ASB incident recording introduced in April 2004 under the National Standards for Incident Recording (NSIR) mean that it is not possible to reliably compare levels of ASB incidents since April 2004 with those recorded before that time. However, based on the figures for January – March 2006, there has been a 14% decrease in recorded ASB since the previous quarter.

Geographical Analysis:

The Wards with the highest incidences of ASB over the last quarter are Huntingdon North, St Neots Eynesbury, St Neots Priory Park and Huntingdon West. This is consistent with previous quarters and with the findings of the Audit.

CRIMINAL DAMAGE

Levels of 'Criminal Damage' have risen again over the last quarter. Over the last three months, almost half of all criminal damage incidents in Huntingdonshire were 'Damage to Vehicles' (334 recorded incidents). This was a 36% rise from the previous quarter.

Geographical Analysis:

The Wards experiencing the highest levels are Yaxley and Farcet (76 counts), St Neots Priory Park (69) and Huntingdon East (55). Eaton Ford (20 to 45) and Ramsey (23 to 44) showed a large increase in number of incidents over the last three months.

VIOLENCE

Recorded assaults and woundings have decreased over the last quarter. When exploring the current twelve-month period against the previous one there has been an overall reduction of 30.2% in 'Violence Against the Person' offences recorded by the police.

Geographical Analysis:

The biggest reduction in the number of Common Assaults and Wounding Offences was in St Neots Eynesbury where the count dropped from 30 between October and December, to 16 (46.7%) in the first three months of 2006. The Ward of Ramsey showed the largest increase with figures rising from 12 to 25 (108.3%) over the same time period.