**Performance and Resources Scrutiny Programme 2018/2019**

**Report to: the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex**

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| **Title of Report:** | **Essex Police Rural Crime Prevention Strategy (12 month progress update)** |
| **Agenda Number:** | **4** |
| **Chief Officer** | **ACC 1883 Prophet** |
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| **Report from:** | **Essex Police** |
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| **Author on behalf of Chief Officer:** | **Chief Inspector 1838 Ian Gennery** |
| **Date of Approval:** | **14/11/18** |

1. **Purpose of Report**

This report provides a review of the delivery of Essex Rural Crime Prevention Strategy 12 months after its launch.

1. **Recommendations**

There are no recommendations, however the Board is asked to note the contents.

1. **Executive Summary**

This report has been requested to provide an overview on the development of the

Essex Police Rural Crime Prevention Strategy, the introduction of the Gypsy,

Traveller and Rural Engagement Team and the delivery and performance of both

In relation to the rural crime agenda in Essex.

**4.0 Introduction/Background**

Over 72% of the Essex Police District is classified by the Office of National Statistics as “rural” and it is widely recognised that the impact of crime and disorder on victims and communities can be greater in rural areas where there are fewer local amenities and support services leading residents to feel more isolated and vulnerable[[1]](#footnote-1).

Despite the consistent fall in the overall level of recorded crime in the last 10 years, it was increasingly evident[[2]](#footnote-2) that residents in rural communities believed that crime was rising, that rural policing was being sacrificed in favour of urban areas and felt increasingly insecure within their own neighbourhood with difficulties with 101, a perceived lack of understanding by the police of rural crime and a decrease in visible policing deterring crime reporting and the level of engagement between rural communities and policing.

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Essex has acknowledged these issues since the post was introduced and the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner’s Rural Crime Forum has existed for over 5 years, bringing together the police, key partners and the rural community to look at the specific issues affecting these areas and identify actions to address them.

Rural Crime is therefore a priority for the PFCC and is an integral part of the Police and Crime Plan 2016-2020.

Essex Police has had a Rural Crime Prevention Strategy since 2013 but this was written by the police for the police and although it acknowledged the role of partnerships such as Community Safety Partnerships and Farm Watch, there was no involvement by partners in its development or delivery.

The strategy was scheduled to be updated in 2017 and this was seen as an opportunity to build on the work of the Rural Crime Forum to involve the support and guidance of our rural communities and key partners led by the Essex Rural Partnership (ERP) to inform the way in which we tackle crime and Anti-Social Behaviour in the rural environment.

It was intended that the strategy reflect the Police and Crime Plan emphasis on the need for greater collaboration and partnership working, particularly the 3 building blocks for success:

1. **Prevention:** By making sure that crime and anti-social behaviour do not happen and that everybody is kept safe from harm.
2. **Communication & Engagement:** By giving the public a voice in local policing and working together to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour
3. **Volunteering:** By providing opportunities that enable people to undertake a more active role in reducing crime and anti-social behaviour

A number of workshops and stakeholder events were held throughout 2017 to identify areas of concern, establish the aims of the strategy and to develop a definition of rural crime.

There is no national definition of Rural Crime, accordingly the definition varies considerably between police services, following consultation with our stakeholders, we now define rural crime as: “**Any crime committed in a rural location, or where the victim is specifically targeted because of their connection to, or involvement in, the rural community, economy, or area”.**

The strategy was developed with 3 key aims;

1. To reduce the volume of crime and ASB being committed in rural areas
2. To continue to bring offenders to justice
3. To increase public confidence in Essex Police

This work was developed in parallel with the recognition of a need to deal with unauthorised traveller encampments and incursions across the county in a consistent manner in keeping with legislation and national guidelines.

At the time, Essex Police was one of the few comparable forces to have no full time Rural Policing Team, although we did have a Gypsy & Traveller Liaison Sergeant and a Wildlife, Heritage, Environmental and Rural Crime Constable based within the Local Policing Support Unit (LPSU) at Police HQ.

The decision was taken to provide 1 FTE Police Constable from each LPA (3) in addition to the LPSU officers to create a team that would focus on Gypsy and Traveller issues (primarily unauthorised encampments) and increase our capacity and expertise to deal with rural crime.

The strategy was launched at a very well supported event on 16th November 2017 on the Dengie Peninsula (a rural crime hot spot), this event also introduced the Gypsy Traveller and Rural Engagement Team (GTRET) as the primary mechanism for delivering the aims of the strategy.

The 4 initial areas of focus for 2017-2018 were:

1. Rural Engagement
2. Hare Coursing
3. Fly Tipping
4. Unauthorised Encampments

**5.0 Current Work and Performance**

From 1st October 2017 to 31st September 2018 reported rural offences increased by 2,233 (more offences), with 15.6% (22,480 offences) of the total crime in Essex occurring in areas classified as rural[[3]](#footnote-3). This is in line with the increase seen in all crime, both in Essex and Nationally.

The LPSU via Farm/Rural Watch and the other media have conducted an intensive campaign to deter under-reporting of rural crime, which may, partially, account for this increase.

The National Police Chiefs’ Council recognises the concerns raised by the National Rural Crime Surveys and the NPCC Rural Affairs National Strategy 2018- 2021 was launched in July 2018.

Essex Police (via the LPSU) has been heavily involved in the development of this strategy due to the development of our own strategy and there are a number of similarities between the two.

Both the national strategy and our own have the objectives of;

1. Creating safer rural communities
2. Enhancing public engagement
3. Increasing public confidence in the police
4. Empowering communities
5. Strong partnership working
6. Embedding a rural focus into policing culture

The Essex Police Rural Crime Prevention Strategy has been adopted as Chapter 9 of the Essex Rural Partnership Rural Strategy 2016-2020: [Feeling Safe and Reducing Crime](https://www.essexruralpartnership.org.uk/Docs/Strategy%202016%20etc/Respecting%20our%20Past%20Embracing%20our%20Future%20A%20Strategy%20for%20Rural%20Essex.pdf) and the LPSU Chief Inspector is now a member of the Essex Rural Partnership Strategic Board.

The delivery of the Essex Police Crime Prevention Strategy is being overseen by a sub-group of the PFCC’s Rural Crime Forum, led by the Deputy PFCC and is overseen by the LPSU, with the Gypsy Traveller and Rural Engagement Team (GTRET) being the primary instrument for delivery.

As stated above, historically, Essex Police were one of the few comparable forces to have no full time Rural Policing Team.

Currently of 53 Police services[[4]](#footnote-4), only 15 have dedicated rural teams (including Essex) and we now have one of the largest.

The team consists of 1 Sergeant and 4 Constables, supported by a dedicated Essex Watch Liaison Officer (EWLO) based within LPSU and can call upon the assistance of the LPSU Crime Prevention & Partnerships Co-ordinator who is a fully qualified Designing out Crime Officer to assist with specialist crime prevention tactical advice.

The team works 7 days a week, normally between 7am and Midnight (this is a flexible pattern and will change to meet demand and facilitate specific activity) working with rural communities to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour through the delivery of activity such as Operations Buzzard and Galileo[[5]](#footnote-5) to detect and disrupt criminality and by working closely with Community Policing Teams (CPTs) in each District Policing Area (DPA) and wider teams such as Roads Policing the wider Operational Policing Command.

It is notable that since the launch of the strategy and the GTRET, Essex has fallen from 3rd (where it has been for 3 years) to 7th in the national table of theft of farm equipment[[6]](#footnote-6).

**Engagement;**

The LPSU has presented to a variety of bodies regarding our activity and the delivery of the Rural Crime Prevention Strategy, including the majority of Full Local Council Meetings, Safer Essex and the Essex Leader and Chief Executives Meeting.

Two local authorities (Maldon and Chelmsford District Councils have subsequently amended their local Community Safety Priorities to include rural crime with at least 4 others considering following suit.

A Single Point of Contact for rural matters has been identified within each CPT and their details communicated to key stakeholders, parish councils and Farm/ Rural-Watch groups.

The Essex Watch Liaison Officer (EWLO) cohort (1 at HQ, 1 in each LPA) managed by the LPSU has been trained to input intelligence received onto Athena, ensuring relevant information is available to all teams and the cohort is engaging with a range of partners including the Essex Association of Local Councils, the Rural Community Council of Essex, Local Authorities and the PFCC’s Rural Crime Forum to re-energise existing Farm-Watch schemes across the county, to develop the scheme where it does not exist and promote re-branding the scheme as Rural Watch to encourage greater participation.

A member of the GTRET, the local CPT or the local EWLO attend all Farm/ Rural Watch meetings and a member of the GTRET attends all PFCC Rural Crime Forum meetings.

The LPSU has worked with the Force Control Room (FCR) to introduce a system of tagging rural crime incidents on STORM has been introduced which alerts all members of the GTRET via e-mail (emergency calls/ crimes in actions being allocated by FCR to local teams or the GTRET if available).

An FCR supervisor reviews all rural crime incidents and ensures FCR staff are aware of the need to include the tag on relevant incidents. The GTRET has also provided inputs to FCR Supervisors training days to raise the issues associated with rural crime. The HQ EWLO reviews all such tagged incidents and makes contact with the informant to ensure all opportunities for intelligence gathering have been explored, including offering crime prevention advice or a follow-up visit by a Designing out Crime Officer, a member of the GTRET or a Rural Community Builder if required.

The Rural Community Builders are 2 members of Essex Fire and Rescue “Green Book” (civilian) staff employed as part of a 12 month pilot overseen by the Collaboration Programme[[7]](#footnote-7), whereby the Police retain their engagement activity with a primary purpose of enforcement, the reduction of crime and disorder and increased public confidence and the Community Builders (whilst contributing to these aims by their activity) will focus on longer term engagement, provision of support and signposting as appropriate (these activities being supported by “normal” police activity), effectively helping communities to help themselves.

This involves close working with the GTRET and the wider LPSU around the tactical delivery of the PIER[[8]](#footnote-8) elements of the Rural Crime Prevention Strategy.

The team has worked with the Special Constabulary Command to devise an assessment process for Special Constables to apply to join the team with 1 appointed to the team in September 2018 and 2 currently on attachment with a view to undertaking the assessment process.

We have been supported in this process by key members of the PFCC’s Rural Crime Forum who have volunteered their farms and their time to role play in order to test candidates’ ability to engage with members of the rural community.

The Team has organised a number of Rural Days of Action which are intelligence led and target crime hot-spots, the most recent being the Essex contribution to the National Rural Crime Day of Action on 8/11/18. This day included:

* 1 arrest (Drink Drive)
* 2 Stop & Searches
* 2 reports to local authorities for carrying waste without a licence
* 5 ANPR activation responses
* 4 Vehicle stops
* 6 Engagement with landowners/land workers
* 3 Intelligence Reports submitted
* 12 hours of high visibility patrol

Each member of the GTRET is trained in using hand held speed detection devices and, when practicable, support the campaign to combat speeding in rural areas by conducting speed checks, issuing in excess of 100 speeding tickets[[9]](#footnote-9).

The Team has also reviewed the format of the biennial Rural Crime Advice Days (RCAD) basing the events on the delivery and success of the Rural Crime Prevention Strategy.

The next such day is scheduled for 14th November 2018 and will focus on the “One Year On” aspect of the Rural Crime Prevention Strategy.

**Hare Coursing;**

The GTRET are members of the Eastern Region Eastern Region Rural Crime Group which draws together intelligence and good practice to combat cross border rural crime, particularly hare coursing.

The Team respond to all hare coursing incidents either via direct allocation by FCR (when on duty) or by follow-up visits as outlined above.

Essex has seen a substantial increase in reports with over 500 incidents since November 2017.

We have responded robustly with Days and Nights of Action to deter, detect and disrupt activity, successes have included:

* Issuing 60 Fixed Penalty tickets
* Seizing 8 vehicles
* Issuing 20 Sec59 warnings/seizures
* Issuing 50 Community Protection Warnings or Notices

Additionally problem solving (SARA) training delivered to CPTs by the LPSU has included specific input around hare coursing and included local farmers as part of the solution and to provide a victim perspective.

**Fly Tipping:**

The Team has have worked closely with the PFCC’s Task and Finish Group, local authorities and the Environment Agency to tackle the issue of industrial scale fly-tipping, this included chairing an “Enforcement sub-Group” of relevant agencies where more sensitive information and tactical options can be shared.

This has resulted in key intelligence sharing between Essex Police and the Environment Agency which contributed to the conviction of 2 Organised Crime Groups involved in industrial scale fly tipping.

The LPSU has worked with the Essex Rural Partnership to attract funding for dash-cams to record offences and are now devising a roll-out plan.

The GTRET has led a number of multi-agency Nights of Action to deter and detect offenders and are using our drone technology to identify offending.

The response to Fly Tipping is now coordinated by the PFCC’s Rural Crime Forum and we will work closely with them to drive future activity.

**Unauthorised Encampments:**

The GTRET aims to attend every unauthorised encampment (U/E) in the county or be in a position to provide specialist advice to local officers if committed elsewhere.

The use of Section 61 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (CJPOA) is considered in every instance but is only used when lawful, necessary and proportionate and in keeping with national guidelines.

A flowchart explaining how and when powers will be utilised has been created and is in the public domain.

Between 1 /10/16 & 30/9/17, there were 536 U/Es in Essex, between 1/10/17 & 30/9/18 (since the creation of the GTRET) there were 449, a reduction of 87 incidents.

In this period, the GTRET have recovered a number of stolen vehicles from unauthorised encampments, including;

* 10 caravans
* 2 motorhomes
* 1 digger
* 4 tractors

**6.0 Implications (Issues)**

None identified

**6.1 Links to Police and Crime Plan Priorities**

The delivery of the strategy and the work of the GTRET touches on all 7 priorities nut most specifically:

**Priority 1 - More Local, Visible and Accessible Policing: (A, B, C, D, E, H, J)**

* + - The creation of the GTRET and increased focus on rural policing in local districts delivers a more visible police presence
    - The activity introduced to engage with communities and victims, share intelligence and have access to the GTRET improves communications and contact between the Police and local communities
    - We are working with a variety of forums and stakeholders to encourage recruitment to the Special Constabulary and Active Citizens
    - We have worked to improve the response via 101 by training Call handling staff and encourage rural communities to make greater use of Do It Online
    - We are working with local CSP partners to include rural crime in their local priorities and plans
    - We are working to develop Farm/ Rural Watch and recruit members of the Special Constabulary
    - By association with C & H above, we are encouraging support for Watch Groups and the wider Citizens in Policing agenda

**Priority 2 - Crack down on Anti-Social Behaviour (A, B, C, D, E, F)**

* + - GTRET activity in response to local concerns is improving responses to ASB at a local level
    - The team is working with the LPSU ASB Manager and PFCC RJ Hub to explore options to deter ASB (CPWs, CPNs)
    - Greater opportunities for engagement are enabling us to listen to the concerns of local communities to increase public confidence

**Priority 5 – Tackle Gangs and Organised Crime (C, D, H)**

* + - The engagement activity between the GTRET, the wider LPSU and rural communities and business is enhancing awareness of the issues of human trafficking and modern day slavery, especially amongst the migrant worker community.
    - The patrol element of the GTET enables a greater police presence on the road network, particularly the less patrolled areas of the county

**Priority 7 – Improve Safety on Our Roads (A, C, F)**

* + - the GTRET engage in speed checks and similar road safety activity countywide

**6.2 Demand**

N/A

**6.3 Risks/Mitigation**

None identified

**6.4 Equality and/or Human Rights Implications**

None identified

**6.5 Health and Safety Implications**

None identified

**7.0 Consultation/Engagement**

CI1838 Ian Gennery: Head of LPSU

PS 2131 Paul Downes: GTRET Sergeant

Mrs Suzanne Harris: Community Safety & Reducing Reoffending Manager OPFCC

**8.0 Actions for Improvement**

None identified

**9.0 Future Work/Development and Expected Outcome**

The aim is to recruit 4 members of the Special Constabulary to support the work of the Team.

There is considerable interest from existing Special Constables and growing interest from community groups in recruitment.

The aim is considered achievable by Spring 2019.

The future of the Rural Community Builders project is uncertain.

We are working with the Citizens in Policing Team to create role profiles for Active Citizens/ Police Support Volunteers to support the team within local communities.

This is an option to be explored even if the Rural Community Builders continue.

Role Profiles should be drafted by January 2019 following which recruitment activity will commence.

Historically Essex Police has separated its geographical area into rural and urban beat codes in order to set appropriate response times for incidents (10 minutes for urban, 20 for rural).

The National Rural Crime Network uses the 2011 Rural-Urban Classification of Local Authority Districts and other higher level geographies definition of rurality for the purpose of research.

Other organisations and rural-themed areas of work use the 2011 Rural-Urban Classifications of Super Output Areas (SOAs), which offers a greater precision in classification and resultant measuring.

We are working with the Head of Analysis to be able to record and measure crime in Essex according to SOA Rural-Urban classification which will provide a far more accurate picture of rural crime in the county.

This is anticipated to be available in early 2019.

We are working with the Public Engagement and Customer Services Team on a local version of the 2018 Rural Crime Survey to establish the impact of the introduction of the GTRET and the Rural Crime Prevention Strategy on responses at a local level. This will need to be conducted 12 months after the national survey (2018) was concluded.

This is anticipated to be between April and June 2019.

Additionally we intend to re-convene the focus groups involved in the creation of the strategy to gain a community/ stakeholder perspective on delivery of our objectives.

**10.0 Decisions Required by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner**

None required

1. The 2015 & 2018 National Rural Crime Surveys [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Via engagement activities such as Farmers’ Action Panels, the PFCC’s Rural Crime Forum and via public correspondence, anecdotal evidence from the National Farmers Union and the Country Landowners’ Association and the volume of complaints being received at district level and via the OPCC. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Note: currently “rural crime” is defined by the beat code where it occurs and certain Essex Policing District do not have any rural beats and therefore will not be recorded- see section 9: Future Work [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The 43 home office forces in England and Wales, the British Transport Police, Civil Nuclear Constabulary, Guernsey, Isle of Man, Jersey, MOD police, RAF Police, Royal Navy Police, Police Service of Northern Ireland and Police Scotland. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Operation Buzzard is an initiative to combat crime in rural communities utilising a variety of tactics, particularly the Essex Police drones. Operation Galileo is a national operation to tackle hare coursing [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. NFU Mutual Rural Crime Report 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The development of a Joint Rural Engagement programme is work-stream 3 within the Emergency Services Collaboration Programme [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. **P**revention, **I**ntelligence, **E**nforcement & **R**eassurance [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. This was not one of the 4 priority areas identified for the GTRET but it is a priority in the Essex Rural Partnership Strategy. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)