**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:** | **Recruitment of Specials** |
| **Agenda Number:** | **7.0**  |
| **Chief Officer** | **ACC Andy Prophet** |
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| **Report from:**  | **Essex Police** |
| **Date of Meeting:** | **3rd January 2019** |
| **Author on behalf of Chief Officer:** | **Supt Simon Anslow** |
| **Date of Approval:** | **14/12/18** |

1. **Purpose of Report**

Quarterly update on recruitment under the Special Constabulary Development Programme.

1. **Recommendations**

Note the increase in applications and headcount growth over the last 3 months

Note the significant operational contribution from the Special Constabulary

Note the declining conversion rate from “apply now” clicks to Success Factors applications and the plans to address

1. **Executive Summary**

As of 30th November 2018 Essex Police Special Constabulary has a headcount of 474 officers. This is the largest headcount for the force since June 2013 and will likely make Essex the second largest Special Constabulary in England and Wales[[1]](#footnote-1).

Over the period 1st September to 30th November 2018 Specials have contributed a total of 44,885 hours, a 38% increase on the same period in 2017 and the largest contribution over a 3 month period since July-September 2011. The hours worked by the Special Constabulary across this period was equivalent to having an additional 94 full time officers, who would attract an annual salary cost of £4.93m.

Essex Police received 267 new applications between 1st September 2018 and 30th November 2018[[2]](#footnote-2). Recruitment of new Specials in the last 3 months has matched the forecasts given in the previous quarterly report.

During the 3 months from 1st September to 30th November 2018 we re-launched the #MyOtherLife campaign, attracting 10,780 users to the website. We increased the use of targeted, paid-for advertising across social media, particularly focussing on the areas of London that historically identify as being part of Essex. This has seen an uplift in both applications from the West of the county and in the proportion of BAME applications – 15.7% of all applications in the period 1st September to 30th November 2018 identified as BAME.

Employer Supported Policing continues to develop with 14 companies now committed to providing their staff with paid time off (12 more than 12 months ago). This has realised a total of 377 hours over the last 3 months, an increase of 947% over the same period last year. Recently signed-up employers include Southend-on-Sea and Basildon District Councils, British Airways, Lloyds Banking Group, KeyMed and WorldPay. These companies have also been supportive of further recruitment, through distribution of material within the company and running recruitment events on their premises. Negotiations are ongoing with a further 17 companies who are interested in the ESP scheme.

There are now 22 Parish or Town Councils signed up to Community Special Constables (CSCs) from across the county. A further 5 councils are seriously engaged but have not yet signed up. Over the last 3 months we have received 12 applications for CSC roles and two new CSCs have attested (Buckhurst Hill and Witham). Witham remains the only town council area with independent officers deployed. Over the last 3 months they have contributed a total of 174hrs to local, visible and accessible policing in that area.

Although the increase in media activity has delivered an increase in applications, ration of “apply now” clicks to actual completed applications is declining. We are reviewing and re-wording the Success Factors landing page to provide better information and establishing a weekly report on incomplete applications for follow-up by Corporate Recruitment.

The plan for 2019/20, as agreed at the September P&RS Board, is to utilise the expertise of an external recruitment or advertising company to review and refresh our activity to attract potential Special Constables. Our internal media team has done some amazing work, but a fresh approach and the additional capacity an external team will bring is necessary to maintain our growth.

**4.0 Introduction/Background**

In September 2016 the headcount of the Special Constabulary was 350 officers. The intention of the Special Constabulary Development Programme has been to double that headcount to 700 officers by March 2019. This was an ambitious target and the change to the recruitment landscape in relation to opportunities to join the regular constabulary has limited our growth. In September 2018 the Performance & Resources Scrutiny Programme accepted a recommendation that the PFCC and Essex Police adjust the ambition to a target of 600 active specials by March 2020 with a stretch target of 700.

Over the last financial year (April 2017 to March 2018) Essex Police had the largest headcount growth of any Special Constabulary in the county and was the 3rd largest volunteer force, behind GMP and the Metropolitan Police. Since March 2018 Essex has grown by a further 51 Specials, whilst GMP have fallen by 60. We are confident that Essex Police now has the second largest Special Constabulary in England and Wales.

This report will focus on current recruitment activity and plans over the next period.

**5.0 Current Work and Performance**

**5.1 Recruitment**

Essex Police received 267 completed applications between 1st September 2018 and 30th November 2018[[3]](#footnote-3). This is an 84% increase from 145 applications in the previous quarter (In 2017 we operated a very different application process so comparable data is not available). Recruitment of new Specials has matched the forecasts given in the previous quarterly report.

**Media Attraction**

* We re-launched the #MyOtherLife campaign to promote the work of, and opportunities within, the Special Constabulary. In addition to re-using some of our previous graphics and posts, the media team produced some new material under the same branding. This activity has attracted 10,780 users to the website in the last 3 months, resulting in 1,572 clicks through to Success Factors and ultimately 267 applications.
* We increased the use of targeted, paid-for advertising across Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and LinkedIn to reach new audiences and focus the message on those most likely to be interested in joining the Specials.
* We increased the level of targeting within the areas of London that historically identify as being part of Essex, this has seen an uplift in both applications from the West of the county and in the proportion of BAME applications – 15.7% of all applications in the period 1st September to 30th November 2018 identified as BAME.
* Of particular note was the use of Facebook “lead adverts” which collect email addresses of users expressing interest in the role. Over 2,000 people have expressed interest giving us a cohort to follow up on through other channels.
* We continue to promote good news stories involving Specials and to promote the specific roles and activities of different Specials e.g. SC Atkinson on the Gypsy Traveller Rural Engagement Team.
* We introduced a weekly vlog on Facebook with one of our Specials, following him through an intensive training course and then on to his first operational duties.
* In the last few weeks we have trialled a new behavioural analysis based internet advertising service through a company called AdMedia. This allows targeted advertising through pop-up messages, based on geography, age, interests etc. It is still too early to assess the effectively

**Recruitment Outreach**

* The start of the academic years saw the recruitment team take part in careers fairs at Colchester, Southend and Chelmsford and the Freshers Fair at the University of Essex
* We have attended community events at Saffron Walden Tesco and Saffron Walden Market; played a visible part at an Air Ambulance Event and advertised the Specials at the Volunteer Police Cadet Parade.
* The team have supported recruitment events linked to the launch of Employer Supported Policing at Basildon and Southend-on-Sea Councils;;
* Other events attended include an employability Event at Anglia Ruskin; EPSA Fireworks; EALC Conference; a recent WLDF Conference and an Essex Police careers fair;;
* In the last quarter the team have hosted two Specials Recruitment Information Events, attended by close to 100 people.
* Experience over the last 2 years of recruitment activity shows that Essex Police hosted recruitment events, careers evenings and university events are the most productive for us, with attendance at conferences and community events the least.

**Employer Supported Policing**

* 14 companies are now committed to providing their staff with paid time off to volunteer as Specials in Essex (12 more than 12 months ago). This has realised a total of 377 hours over the last 3 months, an increase of 947% from 36hrs in the same period last year.
* Recently signed-up employers include Southend-on-Sea and Basildon District Councils, British Airways, Lloyds Banking Group, KeyMed and WorldPay.
* Our EE recruitment event is now confirmed as 23 January in City of London. We will be liaising with neighbouring forces in relation to a joint event.
* We continue to work well with Essex Chambers of Commerce and receive interest from employers following the 4 events attended in the last quarter.
* An example of the effectiveness of these Chambers events: C2C don’t currently have any Essex Specials working with them, but they are keen on the ESP scheme. They will run an internal recruitment event in the New Year and intend to also support us with free station advertising along their line.
* Negotiations are ongoing with a further 17 companies who are interested in the scheme, either through Chambers of Commerce events or as a result of having Specials already employed with them. The latter has proven to be by far the most productive way forward as we find it harder to engage senior management teams where they do not have SCs on staff.

**Community Special Constables**

* We now have 22 Parish or Town Councils signed up to Community Special Constables (CSCs) from across the county.
* A further 5 councils are seriously engaged but have not yet signed up
* We attended the recent EALC event and spoke to representatives from councils to describe and promote the scheme. As a result we have an additional 3 council areas who have expressed new interest.
* Over the last 3 months we have received 12 applications for CSC roles. 3 have been unsuccessful at the assessment centre, the remainder are in pre-employment checks, with 5 placed on upcoming courses.
* In the last 2 months two new CSCs have attested, for Buckhurst Hill and Witham. They are now currently working with Local Policing Teams to complete their portfolios prior to achieving Independent Patrol status, before taking up their position in their parishes.
* Witham remains the only town council area with independent officers deployed. Over the last 3 months they have contributed a total of 174hrs to local, visible and accessible policing in that area.
* Review of recruitment activity being carried out – advice and support is available.

Over the remaining months of this financial year we anticipate the activity we have undertaken increasing the Specials headcount as shown in the below chart, this is consistent with the projections made in the last report to P&RS:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **No.** | **In** | **Out** |
|  | Dec-18 | 474 | 12 | 8 |
|  | Jan-19 | 478 | 15 | 9 |
|  | Feb-19 | 484 | 24 | 8 |
|  | Mar-19 | 500 | 24 | 8 |
|  | **Totals** | **516** | **75** | **33** |

(No. shows predicted headcount at the start of each month)

**5.2 Performance**

Over the last 3 months (1st September to 20th November 2018) Specials have contributed a total of 44,885 hours, a 38% increase on the same period in 2017. The operational contribution over the last 3 months has amounted to 25,726 hours (a 23% increase). The Specials have recorded 17,909 hours of high visibility policing over this time, a 74% increase over the same period last year.

The hours worked by the Special Constabulary across this 3 month period is equivalent to having an additional 94 full time officers, who would attract an annual salary cost of £4.93m.

Over the last 3 months, 75% of Special Constables have volunteered at least 16hrs a month. This compares favourably with a national engagement rate of 55%. Specials are asked to work at least 16hrs per month, however, in the last 3 months Essex Specials have volunteered an average of 31hrs per month each, up from 27hrs per month in the equivalent period in 2017.

Between 1st September and 30th November 2018, 28 Specials have left the Special Constabulary. 9 of these did so to join the regulars; 12 left for personal reasons (ranging from transferring to another force to medical reasons, to changes in personal circumstances); 1 was required to resign for disciplinary reasons; 1 failed in initial training and 5 were hired, but failed to attend initial training. Our annual turnover rate is currently 23.6%, a slight improvement on the last 2 years (24.4% in 2017 and 26% in 2016).

**6.0 Implications (Issues)**

In the last report to this board (September 2018) we identified issues in relation to attraction, vetting, turnover and programme staffing. The decisions made in the resulting meeting have mitigated many of the issues raised:

* The Corporate Vetting Unit have recruited an additional decision-maker, allowing an experienced decision-maker to focus exclusively on the Specials. They will soon be supported by an additional administrator.
* Concerns about increased turnover rates arising from a cohort of joiners last year reaching independent patrol status at a similar time, and applying for the regulars, have not been realised. Turnover to the regulars continues at the same rate as last year.
* The fixed term contracts of programme staff have been extended for a further 2 years, mitigating the risk of staff leaving for other jobs in the crucial third year of the project.

In relation to attraction, as set out above we have invested significantly in additional media through October and November. Whilst this has increased the number of applications (see chart below), we retain the sense that we are having to work harder for the applications.

This analysis has identified that we are seeing a steady decline in the conversion rate from “apply now” clicks to actual completed applications (SF:App Ratio). As a result we are reviewing and re-wording the Success Factors landing page to provide better information on what the application will involve. We are also establishing a weekly report on incomplete applications within Success Factors for the recruitment team to follow up. We will keep the conversion rate under review to determine whether our changes are having the desired effect.

The plan for 2019/20, as agreed at the September P&RS Board, is to utilise the expertise of an external recruitment or advertising company to review and refresh our activity to attract potential Special Constables. Our internal media team has done some amazing work, but a fresh approach and the additional capacity an external team will bring is necessary to maintain our growth.

We have sufficient capacity within recruitment, business centre, vetting and training teams to deliver on our recruitment ambition in 2019/20.

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

The Police and Crime Plan 2016-20 states that the PFCC will: “boost community volunteering, encourage the Active Citizen Programme and grow the police family – doubling the Special Constabulary, with a Special Constable in every community”

The Special Constabulary has grown by 35% since September 2016. Whilst this is not as significant as intended at the outset of the programme, set within the context of a significant reduction in numbers of Specials nationally and our active recruitment of regular officers, this stands as a considerable achievement.

We already have Special Constables aligned to all our DPA Community Policing Teams. The Community Special Constables initiative is starting to gain traction as more applications are received and officers who applied for that scheme attest. Following on from the publicity our Witham CSCs have received we are also seeing growing internal interest in other parishes, including Canvey Island, Burnham-on-Sea and Halstead.

**6.2 Demand**

The impact on demand is best measured through contribution of operational hours. The improvements in operational performance were described in section 5.2.

**6.3 Risks/Mitigation**

The following red risks are identified on the force risk register:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| URN | Score | Risk | Rationale |
| 1196 | 40 - Red | Unable to meet the Special Constabulary establishment target due to Force recruitment. | Surveying continues to show that the majority of Specials are joining with a future intention to join the regulars - 70% of new starters tells us they intend to join up. In the last 12 months we have seen 37 officers leave to join the regulars, this is equivalent to 21% of new starters over the same time period. As officers who have been recruited under the current campaign reach independent patrol status we anticipate seeing an increase number of applications. Anecdotally the recruitment team state that they is an increase in the number of Specials applying for the regulars. |
| 1659 | 40 - Red | Regular recruitment compromising Specials recruitment | Subject to local and national funding decisions, Essex Police hopes to increase establishment beyond 3,000 officers in the next 12 months. This means that the current regular recruitment campaign will continue. The launch of the #FitTheBill campaign saw a marked reduction in applications to the Specials and reduced the capacity for Specials recruitment messages on our social media platforms. Where forces have previously succeeded in doubling the size of the Special Constabulary (Northants, West Yorks) this was done in an environment where the forces were not also recruiting regulars. |

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

There are no specific equality or human rights implications in this paper.

**6.5 Health and Safety Implications**

There are no specific health and safety implications in this paper.

**7.0 Consultation/Engagement**

* Becky Humphreys & Allison Bentley – Corporate HR
* Pru Witherspoon – Media
* Jason Poole – Learning & Development

**8.0 Actions for Improvement**

The action taken to improve recruitment over the last quarter has been summarised in section 5.1 above.

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

The last 3 months has seen an increase in the number of applications to join the Special Constabulary. Over the next 3 months we will continue with the activity that has underpinned this success. In addition we will:

* Commence procurement of an external recruitment/marketing company to deliver our recruitment campaign for 2019/20.
* Recruit to the Corporate Vetting Unit Administrator position
* Develop a “Recommend a Friend” event in March 2019 – taking advantage of our high Net Promoter Score we will provide existing Specials with an opportunity to bring friend/family/colleagues along to experience the work of the Special Constabulary.
* Launch direct recruitment to SCD Specials to try and reach a new audience
* Tap into other EP campaigns to encourage them to feature Specials e.g. upcoming BAME campaign.
* Develop a further action plan targeting career specials as a result of a focus group held on 3rd December 2018.
* Deliver a headcount of 600 Special Constables by the end of March 2020

Subject to attracting sufficient applications over the next financial year, and turnover remaining consistent, our predicted growth is as set out overleaf.

2019/20 Recruitment Timetable:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **No.** | **In** | **Out** |
|  | Apr-19 | 516 | 16 | 11 |
|  | May-19 | 521 | 16 | 11 |
|  | Jun-19 | 526 | 16 | 11 |
|  | Jul-19 | 531 | 30 | 11 |
|  | Aug-19 | 550 | 16 | 11 |
|  | Sep-19 | 555 | 25 | 12 |
|  | Oct-19 | 568 | 16 | 12 |
|  | Nov-19 | 572 | 16 | 12 |
|  | Dec-19 | 577 | 16 | 12 |
|  | Jan-20 | 581 | 25 | 12 |
|  | Feb-20 | 593 | 16 | 12 |
|  | Mar-20 | 597 | 16 | 12 |
|  | **Totals** | **601** | **224** | **139** |

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

No decisions required.

1. At of 31st March 2018 Essex was the third largest Special Constabulary, since then we have overtaken GMP. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Data from Success Factors [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Data from Success Factors [↑](#footnote-ref-3)