**Performance and Resources Scrutiny Programme 2018/19**

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

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| **Title of Report:** | **Essex Police Public Engagement – Summary of District Engagement Plans** |
| **Chief Officer** | **Dr Vicki Harrington** |
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| **Author on behalf of Chief Officer:** | **Claire Heath** |
| **Date of Approval:** |  |

1. **Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to give an update on the Force’s Public Engagement Programme designed to improve public confidence in Essex Police. It provides an update on the progress made by district policing areas to deliver the Public Engagement Strategy at a local level and the work being led by the central Public Engagement Team.

1. **Recommendations**

This report is for the board to note.

1. **Executive Summary**

Essex Police has a strong Public Engagement Strategy which has been independently recognised by HMICFRS in the findings from their 2018 Integrated PEEL Inspection. Local delivery of the strategy has been implemented over the last 12 months in a consistent way across the force, using mandatory engagement activities delivered on a monthly basis.[[1]](#footnote-1) This standardised approach allowed the District Commanders to share their plans regularly with partners and to work with the central Public Engagement Team to assess what works well in their area.

An evaluation of the previous 12 months engagement activity has taken place using the results of the Essex Police (EP) Public Perception Survey to assess the impact of the implementation of the strategy at a local level. New quarterly local District Engagement Plans (DEPs) have been developed for each District for the next period of engagement activity commencing April 2019. These plans will be reviewed formally in October 2019 to ensure plans are developed ahead of new officers joining Community Policing Teams (CPTs) during 2020 and will take into account ongoing insight from the public perception results and feedback from local communities and partners.

There has been a palpable cultural change in how the CPTs are engaging with the public and local communities. A centrally led Public Engagement Team provides support to CPT members to ensure high quality public/partner engagement events are planned, publicised and delivered. This includes training presentations to new members of CPTs to enhance their understanding of the purpose of the local engagement activity and insight from the public perception survey.

There is strong local leadership supporting the delivery of the Public Engagement Strategy to ensure competing demands within the CPTs don’t result in cancellations of publicised events in response to a previous area of concern raised by members of the public.

Views and feedback are sought from public, communities and partners during engagement events, partnership workshops and online/social media surveys. The information and insight gained informs the delivery of future engagement activities and police / partner activity to address concerns.

The impact of this increased level of engagement over the last 12 months is reflected in the EP public perception survey results. The most recent Q3 2018/19 results show that Essex Police has delivered the first part of the strategy; to put effective systems in place to listen to the public and seek feedback to inform improvements:

* Understanding community issues has increased significantly from 53% Q3 2017/18 to 59% Q3 2018/19[[2]](#footnote-2)

During January 2019[[3]](#footnote-3), ACC Prophet led a public engagement workshop with LPA/DPA Commanders, members of the Media Department and the Public Engagement Team to evaluate and assess the initial plans, investigate opportunities to showcase the work of the local police and increase public confidence through partnership working. The outcomes of the workshop are shown in Appendix 1.

This assessment concluded:

* ‘One size did not fit all’ - one or more of the mandatory engagement activities was not suitable or effective for use across all the local policing areas (for example a PCSO may be better deployed to engage with the public in a busy market square than undertake a ‘coffee with a cop’ in an empty venue)
* All districts had improved the systems they had in place to listen to and seek feedback from the public
* Increased focus is now needed to tell the public what local police are doing differently as a result of their feedback.

As a result of the workshop, District Commanders have developed a quarterly ‘District Engagement Plan’ (DEP) based on three new defined work areas - ‘Listen, Act, Tell’. The impact of the plans will be assessed by the Essex Police public perception quarterly results and a follow up evaluation workshop in October 2019.

Good progress has been made to maximise the use of partner communication channels to increase the reach of the Essex Police public feedback and information. For example, the Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) publishes and promotes information from CPTs to all parish and town councils within the Essex Police area. This includes the details of future engagement events as well as providing information about local responses to previous concerns raised. This has helped to respond to feedback from members of the public saying that they wish to know more about what the police are doing in their local area via newsletters sent through their doors.

EP and local CPTs continually strive to find new ways of engaging with the public. Recent developments have included the re-introduction of police station open days and plans to hold a county wide ‘Schools’ Event’ in the Summer term 2020.

EP has delivered the first part of the engagement strategy, putting in place effective mechanisms to ‘***listen’*** to the public. Plans have now been developed to fully achieve the final parts of the strategy ‘***act’*** and ‘***tell’.***

**4.0 Introduction/Background**

The previous report presented to the Performance and Resource Scrutiny meeting on 28th June 2018 discussed the following:

* Introduction of the Public Engagement Strategic Guidance Document
* Strengthening of engagement activities and communications
* Using existing partnership engagement mechanisms
* Street based activities
* Local Community Meetings (LCMs)
* Hard to reach groups

Two main areas for improvement were identified:

* Engagement with hard to reach groups
* Evaluation of engagement activity

This report provides an overview of the work undertaken to address the areas identified for improvement and present new initiatives that have opened up more options to progress engagement opportunities with partners and local communities. This is in line with the EP vision to have a police force that is informed by the needs and priorities of the people of Essex and a county that values and participates in our policing endeavours.

1. **Current Work and Performance**

5.1 Public Engagement Star Chamber

In September 2018, the first Public Engagement Star Chamber was held. District commanders were required to demonstrate how they have implemented the EP Engagement Strategy at a local level. Panel members scrutinised their local engagement activity, future plans, work with partners and how they were using the results of the EP Public Perception Survey to inform their plans and provide feedback to their local communities. Members of the panel included the Deputy Chief Constable, Director of Strategic Change, EP Head of Communications, Head of Public Engagement, independent member Kay Odysseos (Police & Crime Panel) and the Head of Performance (OPFCC).

Common themes and areas for improvement were highlighted throughout the District presentations and included:

* Diversity & Inclusion – specifically, knowledge of the local demographics;
* Hard to Reach Groups - identification of, and dialogue with, harder to reach communities;
* Feedback – specifically, the importance of telling the public what was happening as a results of their concerns;
* Evaluation – the importance of evaluating public engagement activity and learning from the results to re-shape District Engagement Plans

5.1.1 Diversity and Inclusion

The Public Engagement Officers completed District Profiles for each of the District Policing Areas (DPAs) at the beginning of 2018. These profiles have been reviewed and compared to information held and produced by both internal and external partners, for example Hate Crime Research produced by Essex County Council

The review has supported the identification of, and engagement with, smaller often hidden communities such as the Nepalese community in Thurrock and Syrian refugee community in Colchester.

CPTs are utilising their relationships with local IAGs to increase the reach and inclusion of local minority groups, such as members of the Harlow IAG translating the local CPT newsletter into Polish and Bangladeshi. The newsletters are then distributed at local community centres and relevant shops within Harlow.

5.1.2 Hard to Reach Groups

Engagement with hard to reach groups is developing well. For example,

* ‘Coffee with Cops’ is currently taking place in dementia cafes and with the elderly in care homes.
* DPAs are engaging with homeless groups and communities through various community day and partnership activities, such as ‘Op Interact’ a homeless initiative with Braintree District Council, identifying homeless people and putting them in touch with support networks.

Colchester District have been working with the local Royal Association for the Deaf (RAD) to build confidence, share awareness and improve community inclusivity.

* Members of the local RAD attended a meet and greet at Colchester Police Station, met with the district commander and local CPT.
* The event was well received by the group and RAD positively reported the event via the RAD social media networks.

5.1.3 Feedback

The importance of feedback on what has changed or improved as a result of public engagement activity is well known and understood by the District Commanders and their CPTs.

The results from the most recent Public Perception Survey tell us our understanding of community issues has increased significantly over the last 12 months. These results reflect the work of the Local Policing Teams to achieve the first part of the Public Engagement Strategy (LISTEN) with the next period of work focused on responding to local concerns (ACT) and letting the public know what has changed as a result of their feedback (TELL). The work will be supported by the Media Department to ensure there are effective public local level communications about the increased number of officers in each of the CPTs, their plans and what they are achieving.

District Commanders are updating their local District Engagement Plans to ensure the feedback from the public is captured and included in the activity of their CPTs. The plans will have an increased focus on visibility and informing local communities what the local police are doing as a result of the public feedback and the insight gained from survey results.

To highlight how feedback is used to inform activity, the Public Engagement Team have designed a feedback template in the ‘You said, We did’ brand style (Appendix 2). This was used effectively for a Speed Watch Road Check, following concerns about speeding raised at public engagement events. The resulting social media post reached 9,438 people, with approximately 10% expressing their support and approval of road checks and was the highest recorded for the district during the month of October 2018.

The ‘You Said We Did’ template is published via social media, partnership communication channels and on local public notice boards within supermarkets, GP surgeries and libraries.

5.2 Impact, development and delivery of engagement activity and initiatives

The results of the EP Public Perception Survey are used to assess the effectiveness of the Local Engagement Plans.

The results reflect the work of the Public Engagement Team and local CPTs to deliver the Public Engagement Strategy at a local level by:

* Delivering high quality public engagement activities in order to improve public confidence in policing
* Capturing the views and feedback from communities and
* Providing follow up information, which states what has changed or how their information is being used.

To ensure the insight gained from the survey results is used to inform Local Engagement Plans, ACC Prophet chaired a Public Engagement Workshop with LPA/DPA Commanders, Media Department and Public Engagement & Customer Service in January 2019.

The workshop assessed the previous 12 months engagement activity and the requirement for each district to deliver a monthly set of mandatory engagement activities and events. Members of the workshop acknowledged the range of engagement activities being delivered had concentrated on ensuring Essex Police had local systems in place to listen to and understand community concerns.

Future plans will ensure that EP continues to listen, with a focus on delivering actions that promote visibility, a key driver of confidence, and a stronger emphasis on telling and promoting the work of the CPTs through social media and partnership/stakeholder communication channels.

This change in focus builds on the insight and feedback received and will reinforce the work each local area undertakes to address community concerns and let the public know what has changed as a result of their feedback. Advice is also sought from the EP Communications Department to ensure media activity strengthens the public messaging including the best channels to provide feedback to local communities.

District commanders will move away from using mandatory engagement activities, with more freedom to choose from a menu of options to deliver engagement events/actions that work in their area, giving the best opportunities to work with communities and showcase the work of the CPTs to raise confidence levels.

To reflect the changes required as a result of the feedback, evaluation of the current activity and outcomes of the workshop, from April 2019, District Commanders have developed a quarterly ‘District Engagement Plan’ based on three work areas:

Listen

Listening and engaging with communities’ by delivery of appropriate/bespoke engagement events chosen from the menu of options. Identifying issues that are impacting on the community.

Act

Deliver intelligence/information/feedback led actions that improve police visibility and promote the work of the local CPT. This will include the wider police family and partners in supporting delivery and promotion of actions, such as targeted patrol strategies with partners in areas of high ASB reports and Speed Watch events.

Tell

Utilise internal and external partner communication channels (online and printed) to maximise the reach and audience of information about engagement activities and events, highlighting the work of the local CPTs and ‘You Said We Did’ feedback. This will include more positive news items and messages including the increase in local officer numbers in 2019/20 and highlight the good work and activity of local CPTs to local communities, partners and stakeholders in response to community concerns.

The District Engagement Plan is bespoke to each district and has been developed with oversight from the Public Engagement Manager.

To support CPTs and ensure new members have a clear understanding of the importance of their role in public engagement and the District Engagement Plan, public engagement officers will carry out training presentations with CPTs to confirm the ambitions are being delivered to the frontline and are clearly understood. The presentations will also capture the new officers who will be joining the CPTs over the next 12 months.

To support the implementation of DEPs, district infographics have been completed which highlight and strengthen the delivery of ‘Listen, Act, Tell’ at a local level and are used as a tool with the CPTs to increase awareness and understanding of the importance of their role to deliver effective public engagement.

5.3 Supporting the implementation of the District Engagement Plans

5.3.1 Engagement & visibility leaflet

To support the CPTs to engage with the public and communities, the Public Engagement Team have designed an engagement and visibility leaflet/aide memoire for officers and staff to use across the force. (Appendix 3). The leaflet encourages officers to consider all forms of police visibility and introduces the ‘In Your Area’ logo.

The EP ambition is to widen the public’s understanding of visibility, with the public and communities equating ‘In Your Area’ with positive engagement activity.

5.3.2 Public facing engagement activity map

The public facing Engagement Activity Map has been published on the external website for ten months. The map displays all public facing engagement activities across the force. Users are able to access and see all the events or areas of interest, in their area by using the ‘zoom’ function to display individual districts.

To date the map has been viewed over 113,000 times, with over 12,000 viewings in one month (October 2018). The link is included with information and updates given to partners to ensure they are kept up to date and to use in their newsletters and updates with local communities.

A monthly comparison of the number of views each district receives shows where districts are receiving significantly less viewings than others. This allows the public engagement officers to raise the profile and awareness of the map through EP and partner communication channels.

5.3.4 Partner Communication Channels

Feedback received through ‘Coffee with a Cop’ and local community meetings has indicated the existing promotion of engagement activities and events in local areas may not be reaching some older/elderly Essex residents or other members of the public who are unable or do not want to access information by social media.

The Public Engagement Team carried out an examination of partnership communication channels to ensure full use was being made of what was available or whether there were opportunities to further exploit this method of communication and particularly those channels being used by the older residents/communities. This review identified how parish councils and neighbourhood watch schemes could support communication with this section of the public and community.

The Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) & Neighbourhood Watch [[4]](#footnote-4) accepted an invitation to publish the local district commander’s monthly infographics, local engagement activities and information and now publishes and promotes information from Essex Police to all parish and town councils within the Essex Police area. The information includes the ‘You Said We Did’ reports for publication in their bulletins, newsletters and social media channels.

5.3.5 Social Media

Since November 2018, the Public Engagement Team have been monitoring CPT Facebook posts to identify the types and content of posts which attract the largest reach and engagement by followers.

In November 2018 the 11 district policing area Facebook accounts had 51,439 followers, which rose to 62,224 followers in March 2019. In terms of reach, in November 2018 over 350,000 people had seen the posts increasing by 244% to 854,000 in March 2019.

Social media continues to be a valuable engagement tool allowing internal and external partners to post joint events and activities, such as the Community Rural Builders and Community Safety Partnerships when participating in activities such as a ‘Street Week’ activity. Twitter continues to be used extensively by the Force and increased used by central teams (such as roads policing and rural crime officers) is allowing the District commanders to easily share the activity of the work of central teams in their areas to increase awareness and police visibility alongside their CPTs.

1. **Implications (Issues)**

RSM Communications & Engagement Audit

RSM conducted an audit of the public engagement activities and stakeholder engagement in Summer 2018. The findings showed that controls were adequately designed and applied, no management actions were required.

The last 12 months public perception survey results have shown a significant positive increase in our understanding of community issues. This clearly indicates through current engagement activities EP is listening to communities and having a positive impact.

The District Engagement Plans from April 2019 will focus more on telling communities what the police have been doing in their local area, how their feedback is being used to bring about change and what the police have done as a result of their feedback.

Increased activity with local media is already taking place. District commanders have introduced regular columns in local newspapers, such as the Saffron Walden Reporter, Harlow Star and local community media such as the CM17 newsletter, to inform the public and communities what is happening in their area and promote the work of the local CPT.

**7.0 Risks/Mitigation**

A risk relating to public confidence is recorded on the force risk register. The effective and appropriate engagement activities carried out by districts and the central Public Engagement Team will have an effect on the level of risk currently recorded.

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

The Essex Police Engagement Strategy includes ‘Inclusion’[[5]](#footnote-5) as a principle of effective engagement.

**9.0 Health and Safety Implications**

None identified

**10.0 Consultation/Engagement**

Consultation and engagement has taken place with:

* Chief Officer Team
* Members of the Victim Focus & Public Confidence Board
* Members of the Local Policing & Crime Board
* Members of the Force Synergy and Senior Leadership team meetings
* LPA Commanders and District Commanders
* Superintendent Craig Saunders – Supt Lead for Engagement

**11.0 Actions for Improvement**

Braintree & Uttlesford social media pilot

There is a significant difference in the Public Perception Survey results for the Braintree & Uttlesford districts. Despite an equal amount of engagement activity and input, the desired outcomes and impact are not being recognised in the Uttlesford section of the district.

The most recent public perception survey results for Uttlesford record a further decrease in performance in some areas.

As a result of discussion with panel members at the Public Engagement Star Chamber and feedback from local communities, Braintree & Uttlesford have commenced a pilot to introduce dedicated Facebook and Twitter pages for each area.

Early indications from the community have been positive, the numbers of followers continues to grow in the Uttlesford area. The results of this pilot will inform future decisions and whether to introduce separate pages for Castle Point and Rochford and Chelmsford and Maldon.

Additional support is also being put in place to support the District Commander with the challenges ahead. Following the Engagement Star chamber, Kay Odysseos, Police and Crime Panel, has met the District Commander to discuss opportunities to improve the impact of the events and activities taking place in the Uttlesford area. The public engagement manager also attends these meetings to support the district commander and capture good practice/recommendations to share with the wider force.

**12.0 Future Work/Development achieving**

12.1 Partner Workshops

Planning is underway to hold a partner workshop in Uttlesford District (April 2019). The workshops will seek views on two key areas:

* Identify gaps in EP current public engagement (what and how does EP need to improve)
* How EP and partners can work together to ensure effective local engagement

The insight and results of the surveys will be shared with partners at engagement workshops to identify opportunities for joint local partner engagement activities and public communications.

Previous workshops have proven successful in Chelmsford, Maldon and Basildon.

12.2 Future evaluation

The effectiveness of the ‘Listen, Act, Tell’ District Engagement Plans will be evaluated by the results of the quarterly public perception survey which provides quarterly results at a district level and will indicate whether the activities are influencing the levels of public confidence, specifically the percentage of responses answering ‘good’ or ‘excellent’ when asked ‘Taking everything into account, how good a job do you think the police in this area are doing?’

To continually improve and evaluate local engagement activity the Public Engagement Officers will support the DPAs by carrying out bespoke surveys (on-line and face to face), with community forums and seeking stakeholder/partner feedback.

The DCC and other panel members will conduct a follow up Public Engagement Star Chamber in October 2019 to evaluate the implementation of the DEPs and the’ Listen, Act, Tell’ activity.

12.3 Single Online Home (SOH)

Single Online Home represents a transformative programme across national policing, seeking to modernise not only the way in which policing engages with the public but also how it delivers core services.

The ability to provide information to the public at a level lower than the current ten District Policing Areas is currently being scoped by the implementation team for the new Essex Police website via the Single Online Home platform. This will allow a more local feel and more local communications for external facing webpages.

The proposed neighbourhood pages will:

* Improve the digital interaction between the public and CPTs.
* Improve the flow of local information to communities.
* Allow easy access by public to information about their local area.
* Identify locally responsible police officers and PCSOs.
* Aim to increase confidence and satisfaction by showcasing the work of local CPTs, highlighting opportunities for local engagement.

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

To note the update provided

1. Coffee Activity, Hard to Reach Group, Street Activity, Partnership, Social Media, LCM [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 95% confidence within a range of +/- 1.1% [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This was as the end of the first 12 month period of consistent county wide implementation of the strategy. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. NHW has a reach of over 120,000 Essex residents. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. There will be early engagement with people and groups affected by the focus of the engagement and measures will be taken to include groups with protected characteristics. (See below). Participants are committed to a two-way communication with the communities they work with and represent. The wide range of opinions and views are valued. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)