

PFCC Decision Report

Report reference number: 171-21
Classification Official
Title of report: ASB Quad Bike Trial
Area of county / stakeholders affected: Thurrock District
Report by: Ch Supt Stuart Hooper Date of report: 8 th December 2021 Enquiries to: Ch Supt Stuart Hooper

1. Purpose of the report

The PFCC is requested to endorse the purchase and deployment of off-road quad bikes being used to combat anti-social behaviour (ASB) in Thurrock.

2. Recommendations

- That the PFCC endorses the planned quad bike trial in partnership with Thurrock's Community Safety Partnership (CSP).
- That the PFCC approves a contribution of £10,139 towards the purchase of two quad bikes, associated equipment and running costs for Thurrock with a total cost of £41,639. The £31,500 balance of the expenditure will be met by Thurrock's CSP.
- That the PFCC provides formal approval for the procurement process to commence.

3. Benefits of the proposal

Although the CSP would contribute to the funding and would highlight areas of concern, the PFCC would retain ownership of the asset and operational independence would remain with the local District Commander.

More local, visible, and accessible policing

The quad bikes will allow officers to show strong, visible and preventive policing in ASB hotspots. They will also allow officers to apprehend and deal with offenders more quickly, as they will be able to get to these locations swiftly and without difficulty. In turn we will increase our ability to seize vehicles and document our positive disposals. This will increase public confidence, demonstrate that we understand our community's concerns and deter would-be criminals from committing similar offences by coming into Thurrock to drive an off-road vehicle. As much as these would be Thurrock assets, targeting off-road vehicle nuisance in the district, the team will be able to assist other districts where resources permit in tackling similar issues, or even searching rural land for missing persons for example.

Cracking down on anti-social behaviour

Our ability to target off-road vehicle ASB will be enhanced significantly, as will our response times. Overtly Essex Police will also be able to demonstrate on social media that we have the ability to respond off-road. This will reduce further ASB as individuals will be less willing to drive off-road through fear of being caught. It will improve engagement and communication with local communities as the public will have confidence that we understand local issues. The quad bikes can also be used at engagement events to further improve relationships with some of our hard-to-reach groups.

Protecting children and vulnerable people from harm

Vulnerable children and adults go missing in Thurrock almost every day. When a large rural area would need to be searched quickly the quad bikes could offer a rapid and efficient tool in order to locate the MISPERs or eliminate an area of the search grid. This would be far more efficient than searching on foot and able to search in areas where the National Police Air Service (NPAS) would be ineffective, such as woodland with tree canopy cover. Ultimately our ability to locate and safeguard vulnerable individuals would be enhanced.

Improving safety on our roads

Many of the off-road drivers travel to the location using our road network. They do so usually with no insurance and travelling at excessive speed. With the use of the quad bikes, we will be better equipped to detain individuals and seize these vehicles, thereby preventing their use. The presence of the bikes may also deter individuals from bringing their bikes into Thurrock through fear of being apprehended.

Responding to the public

In the last five months the District Command has received more concerns from the PFCC's office, Councillors and the public in regard to off-road vehicle nuisance than anything else. At the Independent Advisory Group (IAG) meeting in Thurrock, this is the number one area of concern and Thurrock's top priority when targeting ASB. We know that the community is concerned around this issue and this proposal will allow the force to target and address it effectively.

Prevention and deterrence

As previously highlighted, the quad bikes will allow officers to show strong, visible and preventive policing in ASB hotspots. They will also allow officers to apprehend and deal with offenders quickly, as they will be able to get to these locations swiftly and without difficulty. In turn, we will increase our ability to seize vehicles and document our positive disposals. This will increase public confidence, demonstrate that we understand our

community's concerns and deter would-be criminals from committing offences by coming into Thurrock to drive an off-road vehicle.

Major events

For events in rural locations the vehicles could be used to support the organisation in achieving its aims and objectives.

Collaboration

The quad bikes will be used in targeting off-road vehicle ASB. Thurrock Council is supportive of the proposal and will look to task its Enforcement Team to work with us on joint operations. This will further strengthen our relationship and demonstrate to the public efficiency in working side by side with the council to target issues of concern.

4. Background and proposal

Operation Caesar was created in 2017 as Thurrock Community Policing Team's (CPT's) response to the riding of scrambler / quad bikes both on and off road in an antisocial manner. From 1st January 2021 to 12th April 2021 there were just under 250 calls made to Essex Police regarding off-road vehicle nuisance in Thurrock.

The PFCC's office regularly contacts Thurrock Council and Essex Police with concerns or complaints around our response to off-road vehicles in the local area. Often this contact is at least on a weekly basis. Constituents often ask the PFCC and Leader of Thurrock Council what our response is to off-road vehicle nuisance in Thurrock. Local Councillors and Panel members of the Thurrock IAG list off-road vehicle nuisance as one of the most important issues for Police in Thurrock to combat in 2022. The Chief Executive of Thurrock Council sees this issue a top priority. To say that this is an area of concern for the local community would be an understatement. On 8th December 2020 a moped being driven off-road illegally collided with a schoolgirl making her way home in Grays causing significant injuries. On 21st March 2021 a quad bike lost control in South Ockendon and collided with a lamp post, fatally wounding the driver. This combined with a significant amount of reports of vehicles causing damage to land and endangering the public have the community concerned and fearful.

Nationwide research has been carried out by Essex Police to gain insight and best practice from other forces. The most common theme was that forces have come away from motorbike teams and now utilise quad bikes to target off-road vehicles. Constabularies in South Yorkshire, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Nottinghamshire, Scotland, Merseyside, and many others all have initiated quad bikes into their approach in targeting ASB off-road. Feedback indicated that they are extremely effective and have boosted public confidence in the police's effectiveness in combating the issue. In some forces the bikes were not equipped with blue lights and, in the majority, the quad bikes were not used in any form of pursuit. There were far too many risk implications associated with this and this would be the proposed stance for Essex Police. These assets will be used to assist officers in the prevention of off-road ASB. There will be no use in responding to incidents nor to pursue suspects that make off from them either on or off road. The quad bikes will have both on and off-road capability allowing them to be driven to target locations from the station. The quad bikes would allow officers to get to target locations quickly and disrupt offenders before they could escape. From an engagement perspective it was suggested that offenders were less likely to operate in areas with a dedicated police quad bike asset due to the perceived risk of being caught, prosecuted and / or having their vehicle seized. The quad bikes in other forces have been used in engagement events with youths as well as assisting in the search of rural

areas for high risk missing persons. This has the potential to save hundreds of officer hours in searching large rural areas as well as saving thousands in not needing to utilise the NPAS.

Overall, some of the statistics generated from other forces' off-road vehicle teams was impressive. West Yorkshire Police's Bradford quad squad seized 820 vehicles and issued almost 900 section 59 warnings in just three years of the team being formed. South Yorkshire saw its team expand from six officers to 13 in April 2020 following huge reductions in ASB. The new team targeted a specific district as, in April alone, it was receiving 1,190 calls from the public for the month reporting off road vehicle nuisance. In August this fell to 166 as a result of the off-road vehicle deployments. The team seized 49 vehicles in this time and issued 102 section 59 warnings. Doncaster introduced its team in 2019 and saw a reduction of seven percent in off-road vehicle nuisance.

Several positive stories in respect of locating high risk missing persons in rural areas were found. In fact, if you search the web for news stories about police using quad bikes it is overwhelmingly positive with vast community support for the idea. This is just a small overview of some of the positive news stories of other forces already reaping the benefits of deploying officers on off-road vehicles. Essex Police is an innovative force that is usually ahead in modern approaches to problems. With this issue it is clear that we need to get up to speed with other forces in combating this type of ASB.

The quad bike trial (Operation Caesar) will run for 12 months in partnership with Thurrock's CSP. The proposal is to allocate two quad bikes to the Thurrock CPT for use in Operation Caesar and train four officers in their use.

The allocation would be part funded by the CSP which deems this to be a major issue of concern for the community. It has offered to provide Essex Police with £31,500 towards the start-up of this pilot, leaving only £10,139 for the organisation to commit to.

Not only is this the most cost-effective option but it will allow the force to truly examine the strengths and weaknesses of this new approach. After 12 months the organisation would be able to identify accurately how efficient the bikes were at combating the off-road ASB and potentially the results could be used to increase the scale of the project to cover wider areas.

Although the CSP would contribute to the funding the operational independence of the local District Commander would remain in place (i.e. the CSP can ask us to police a certain area, but it cannot instruct Essex Police to do so just because it contributed towards the cost).

5. Alternative options considered and rejected

During the consultation a variety of other options were considered. They included a dedicated quad bike team with OSG at Boreham and consideration of the use of off-road motorcycles. The data obtained from other forces and review of the strengths and weaknesses gave clear direction that quad bikes utilised by the Thurrock Community Policing Team was the best option. It is strongly believed, based upon research, that the introduction of these assets will improve our way of targeting off-road ASB and reduce demand. It is expected that we will see fewer calls to police as we progress, as it is anticipated that individuals who are known to travel to Thurrock to commit offences will look elsewhere. Officers will have more time to target multiple areas of community

concern and be able to address a report of off-road vehicle nuisance in half of the time it would normally take to deploy via an alternative vehicle and then on foot.

6. Police and Crime Plan

By acting on our communities' and partners' concerns we will be serving the public and improving public trust and confidence.

This modern and innovative approach to off-road vehicle nuisance has already been adopted by many other forces. Our officers will be able to target off-road drivers more efficiently by getting to locations with ease and efficiency. It will also save valuable time that is currently wasted chasing drivers around at locations with officers walking 15 minutes to a location to try to engage with them. This will maximise our coverage in targeting multiple areas of concern with the extra time gained therefore making "more time to fight crime".

Further investment in crime prevention

The investment in the off-road vehicles team will assist in the prevention and reduction of crime and ASB. It will move Essex Police in line with initiatives already in operation within other forces in the UK. The quad bikes will allow officers to show strong, visible and preventive policing in ASB hotspots. It will also allow officers to apprehend and deal with offenders more efficiently as they will be able to get to these locations swiftly and without difficulty. In turn we will increase our ability to seize vehicles and document our positive disposals. This will increase public confidence, demonstrate that we understand our community's concerns and deter would-be criminals from committing offences by coming into Thurrock to drive an off-road vehicle.

Protecting rural and isolated areas

The creation of the team is due to the escalating concerns in the community over the damage this type of ASB causes to green belt land and our rural areas. The ability to target this type of crime will assist in protecting our vulnerable rural land in Thurrock.

Improving the safety of our roads

Many off-road drivers travel to the location using our road network. They do so usually with no insurance and travelling at excessive speed. With the use of the quad bikes, we will be better equipped to detain individuals and seize these vehicles, thereby preventing their use. The presence of the bikes may also deter individuals from bringing their bikes into Thurrock through fear of being apprehended.

Encouraging volunteers and community support

The proposal includes training an additional Special Constable in the use of quad bikes. Publicising this will likely make the role of a Special Constable in Essex Police appeal to a wider variety of individuals. The quad bikes can also be considered for engagement with youths and hard to reach communities. There has been similar success with this type of engagement as well as a reduction in ASB brought about by the jet ski pilot spearheaded by C/Insp Deex. CSEOs and the Essex Police Press Office will be able to utilise social media channels to show our communities that we are listening to their problems and the tactic will act as a visual deterrent.

Increasing collaboration

The quad bikes will be used in targeting off-road vehicle ASB. Thurrock Council is supportive of the proposal and will look to task its Enforcement Team to work with us on

joint operations. This will further strengthen our relationship and also demonstrate to the public our efficiency in working side by side with the Council to target issues of concern.

Victims

The victims of repeated ASB in vulnerable area's will be supported by our new approach. By addressing the issues and taking enforcement action our victims will feel supported and understood. It will also reduce the amount of further repeat victims and new victims of this type of ASB.

Violence

By being able to effectively deal with the issue we will not see circumstances where the community feels the need to take matters into its own hands. The public will have faith that the police have the ability and equipment to deal with the issue. This will reduce instances involving physical confrontations between communities and off-road drivers.

Vulnerability

Repeat victims are always treated as being vulnerable and ASB is no exception. Our ability to target the issues and reduce the ASB will support our victims. Further, as previously stated, the quad bikes can be used to help search for vulnerable persons reported missing in rural locations.

Visibility

Our profile in targeting off-road vehicle ASB will be increased significantly through social media, word of mouth and our actions. Communities will see our officers being able to get access to vulnerable rural locations and dealing with off-road drivers. Our communities will feel reassured that the police are dealing with the issue and that we understand their concerns.

7. Police operational implications

The OPC and RPU were both consulted with, specifically around the use of quad bikes. The Driving School and the force lead for pursuits, Insp Carl Habbershaw, were engaged around the implications of pursuits. Ultimately, the drivers would be trained and instructed that under no circumstance should they pursue any vehicles on or off road in the interests of health and safety.

The Transport Services Workshop was consulted with around maintenance, repair and servicing. This allowed some scope around costings and fuel usage. Although Thurrock Council is making a significant investment in the scheme, it acknowledges and supports that it will have no operational ownership of the bikes. Where they are deployed will be decided by Essex Police and the West LPA command team. It may be possible to equip the quad bikes with telematics in the future but this has not been explored for the pilot scheme.

Once the pilot of 12 months is over we will be able to assess the effectiveness of the bikes and decide on an appropriate course of action. The scheme could be continued with the costs drastically reduced per annum as we will already own the equipment and have trained the officers. We may even look to expand the team or replicate it in other areas. Ultimately, the assets purchased will belong to the PFCC. At the end of the 12 month period, the force will review the efficiency of the pilot by looking at the amount of calls for service made to our key target areas in Thurrock, proactivity from the Operation Caesar monthly returns and public feedback from IAGs and local Councillors. This can be presented back to chief officers to evaluate the costs compared with the

results over the 12-month trial. We will look to go back to the CSP every year (if the trial is successful) and request finance to support the quad bike team.

Officers from the CPT will be trained to LANTRA certification (off road vehicle accreditation) which will allow them to use the bikes lawfully on and off road for five years. The course is designed to enhance the rider's ability to use an All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) on and off road safely. It also includes health and safety and loading. The only requirement for this training is that the holder owns a full UK driving licence. The College of Policing's Authorised Professional Practice (APP) does not cover ATV training, but it indicates that we need to ensure that we are using an appropriately trained external company that will give our officers the skills to use the device. Other forces already take advantage of LANTRA training we are suggesting, and it would be more than sufficient. Personal protective equipment (PPE) will be purchased for each trained officer. The quad bikes will be parked at Grays police station and outdoor covers will be required to ensure they are protected from the elements.

Every weekend allocated officers will deploy on Operation Caesar to carry out patrols on the quad bikes in target locations. The bikes will deploy with marked police vehicles and drone support from the OSG and Thurrock Council. A policy will be drafted prior to deployment which will detail officers having to activate body worn video every time that they are riding the ATVs on or off road. This will ensure accountability, safety and supervisor review of deployments.

Four members of the CPT have been identified as being suitable candidates for the training. The officers were nominated by the CPT Inspector for being mature, proactive and competent officers.

The quad bikes can also be considered for engagement with youths and hard to reach communities. There has been similar success with this type of engagement as well as a reduction in ASB through the jet ski pilot spearheaded by C/Insp Deex. CSEOs and the Essex Police Press Office will be able to utilise social media channels to show our communities that we are listening to their problems and the tactic will act as a visual deterrent.

The LPSU Command is supportive of a Special Constable being trained and equipped to deploy with the Thurrock CPT which will increase capacity for deployments and involve the wider policing family.

8. Financial implications

The total cost of this proposal amounts to £41,639, of which £21,000 is capital expenditure and £20,639 are one-off revenue consequences. A breakdown of the cost elements is included below.

Capital

£20,000 purchase of two quad bikes

£ 1,000 for a trailer capable of transporting the two bikes

£21,000 total capital cost

Revenue consequences

£ 600 police livery / markings for two quad bikes

£ 6,000 per annum for service maintenance and repair for two quad bikes

£ 2,440 to train four officers to LANTRA certification to ride the quad bikes

£ 4,000 to purchase PPE for four officers
 £ 2,739 insurance
 £ 4,800 quad bike fuel (estimated value based on our motorcycle fleet and research)
 £ 60 for two outdoor quad bike weather protectors
£20,639 total revenue consequences

£41,639 total capital and revenue cost

Income (externally funded)

£31,500 Total Thurrock Council contribution to the pilot.

The total funding contribution requested from the PFCC is thus £10,139 (this is one-off capital funding for the pilot, the costs having been reviewed and confirmed by Corporate Finance).

9. Insurance, Deployment, Health and Safety

Essex Police has a statutory duty to ensure that any purchase adheres to the PFCC's Financial and Procurement Regulations. Within the Financial and Procurement Regulations it is specified that all assets are to be owned by the PFCC, although there is a Scheme of Consent that would allow the Chief Constable to acquire property of this nature, due to its relatively low capital value.

The deployment of officers on quad bikes is understandably something that carries a degree of risk. From an insurance perspective any PVIs would have an impact on our premiums. In the same respect, health and safety around the quad bike deployments is a top priority. However, by virtue of the LANTRA training (which covers health and safety as part of the course), personal protective equipment, candidate selection and a policy around deployment, the risk around this is significantly reduced.

The quad bikes can be purchased with tyres that are suitable both on and off road. This would eliminate the need for the bikes to be transported to the deployments. However, included in the cost breakdown is a trailer capable of carrying two quad bikes. A 4x4 vehicle could be used by an appropriately trained driver to drive the trailer to each target location and deploy where appropriate. This would reduce the overall mileage of the quad bikes and allow us to purchase off-road tyres.

10. Staffing implications

CPT staff would be trained by an external agency to enable them to use the equipment.

11. Equality and Diversity implications

The EIA does not identify any implications.

12. Risks

Risk	Mitigation
Risk of Injury to staff - Riders who are unfamiliar with the particular quad bike or farm terrain, and / or unskilled in proper active riding techniques are at increased risk of injury. Managing the hazard means ensuring that riders are competent to use the quad bike.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure staff have the right training, PPE and clothing to ensure that we reduce the risk of injury and patrolling in pairs
Pursuit capability – Injury being caused to other riders as a result of pursuits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The force policy will mean no pursuits. The vehicles will be used for engagement and shepherding
Damage to vehicles and low deployments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The force policy will ensure that the vehicles and kept as roadworthy as possible to maximise deployments

13. Governance Boards

Approved at the Local Policing Board on 25th June 2021 and the PFCC’s Strategic Board on 14th December 2021.

Report Approval

The report will be signed off by the PFCC Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer prior to review and sign off by the PFCC / DPFCC.

Chief Executive / M.O.

Sign:



Print: P. Brent-Isherwood

Date: 24 January 2022

Chief Finance Officer / Treasurer

Sign: 

Print: Julia Berry

Date: 25 January 2021

Publication

Is the report for publication?

YES

NO

If 'NO', please give reasons for non-publication (Where relevant, cite the security classification of the document(s). State 'None' if applicable)

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.....None.....

If the report is not for publication, the Chief Executive will decide if and how the public can be informed of the decision.

Redaction

If the report is for publication, is redaction required:

1. Of Decision Sheet?

YES

2. Of Appendix?

YES

NO

NO

If 'YES', please provide details of required redaction:

.....
.....None.....

Date redaction carried out:

Treasurer / Chief Executive Sign Off – for Redactions only

If redaction is required, the Treasurer or Chief Executive is to sign off that redaction has been completed.

Sign:

Print:

Chief Executive/Treasurer

Date signed:

Decision and Final Sign Off

I agree the recommendations to this report:

Sign: 

Print: Roger Hirst

PFCC

Date signed: 25 January 2022

I do not agree the recommendations to this report because:

.....
.....
.....

Sign:

Print:

PFCC/Deputy PFCC

Date signed: