

Performance and Resources Scrutiny Programme 2022

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

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1.0 Purpose of Report

This report is designed to provide answers to specific questions asked by the PFCC as well as any new initiatives and issues within Operational Policing Command.

2.0 Recommendations

For the Board to note the content.

3.0 Executive Summary

This is a half-yearly update on how Operational Policing Command is contributing towards the Force Plan and Police and Crime Plan. The Office of the PFCC provided specific questions based on the previous annual report. They requested that this update purely focussed on these questions and any other matters by exception.

4.0 Introduction/Background

The PFCC has asked that the following areas are covered within this half-yearly update:

- **Dog Section**
 - Large increase in dangerous dog incidents and seizures to June 2021, compared to June 2020 (additional 381 incidents and 28 seized) – is this trend continuing or slowing?
 - Any development with external training courses?
- **Resilience Department**
 - Has the backlog which existed last year been cleared? How many emergency plans and business continuity plans are in date / out of date?
- **Force Support Unit and Firearms Training**
 - In the last report the Firearms training team were 3 instructors under establishment – is this still the case?
- **Taser Governance**
 - Last report advised 636 Specialist Taser Officers, and on track for 737 by December – has this target been achieved?
- **Stansted Airport**
 - New model implemented 1 August 2021 – how well is this working? Are there any concerns/issues?
 - Are passenger numbers still low and manageable?
 - Are there still more deportation flights and if so, what is the impact on policing?
- **Operational Support Group**
 - What are the key areas of focus for OSG activity in the next 6 months?
- **Marine Unit**
 - What are the benefits of having the Personal Water Carrier (jet ski) gifted by Maldon DC? Has ASB reduced as a result?
 - Have there been any opportunities to use PSPOs on water yet?
- **Specialist Operations**
 - Has the uplift now been achieved (POLSA and LSO)?
 - Has the target of 125 CBRN responders been reached yet?
- **SVU**
 - Are remand figures remaining high (last report stated 89% compared to 21% in previous three years)?
 - Is sentencing also remaining higher (reported average 4.9 years up from 16.5 months)?
 - Is the PPP team in place and what impact is it having?

- **Other questions**

- **Rising kennel costs for seized dogs** were highlighted in the last report. Four options were under consideration – has one been selected, or are there any additional options being considered? What is the timeframe for making any changes? Is this still a concern?
- **Force Support Unit and Firearms Training** – The FSU was 15 ARVOs under strength leading to cancelled leave and rest days – have the 15 vacancies been filled? Are rest days/leave still impacted?
- A modular approach to the IFC course was being explored – have any decisions been made about this and/or has anything progressed?
- **Marine** – any update on the launch (ALERT IV) due for refurbishment, and when this might take place? Is there any impact on operations in the meantime?
- **Specialist Ops – CBRN budget shortfall** – has this been resolved or is it still an issue?
- **Public Order Training** – Do we have the required number of public order silver and bronze commanders?

5.0 Current Work and Performance

5.1 Dog Section

Q. Large increase in dangerous dog incidents and seizures to June 2021, compared to June 2020 (additional 381 incidents and 28 seized) – is this trend continuing or slowing?

This is plateauing currently but still higher than it has been previously. The sudden increase previously seen may be attributable to people buying “lockdown puppies”. If this proves to be the case then the numbers should reduce although we will still see seasonal trends, albeit at higher levels than before.

A media release has been drafted in collaboration with the RSPCA which is due out imminently. This is targeted at new owners/prospective owners and highlights things to consider and organisations to support them.

Q. Any development with external training courses?

The external training course suggestion working with G4S was not supported by Chief Officers. The dog section Inspector is continuing to explore other external training opportunities.

Q. Rising kennel costs for seized dogs were highlighted in the last report. Four options were under consideration – has one been selected, or are there any additional options being considered? What is the timeframe for making any changes? Is this still a concern?

Kennel costs have been reduced through applying greater scrutiny to the working practices of the kennels with the Dangerous Dog Manager giving clear direction around what is and isn't acceptable. Furthermore, the budgets have been reviewed and there is now a separation between dangerous dogs and those seized as used in crime (stolen/hare coursing). This has realised predicted underspend of £10K which is £30K down on last year despite the increased demand.

5.2 Resilience Department

Q. Has the backlog which existed last year been cleared?

The backlog of plans to be reviewed remains and continues to be a challenge. Whilst the team continues to work hard on their reviews additional work, such as new plans and reports, continue to come in. The lack of capacity to train, exercise, and test the plans has been highlighted as an area of focus. The Department is pressing forward with training and exercising, the most recent being Op Blackstar, a testing exercise for the response to a total electric outage.

Q. How many emergency plans and business continuity plans are in date / out of date?

Following our regular internal quality assurance check we find that 69% of Business Continuity plans are in date as of 1st February 2022. In addition, 64% of Emergency plans are in date.

The Head of Emergency Planning highlights that the plans currently out of date are all subject of active review.

This has been a consistent figure over the last 12 months.

Chief Officers have recently approved the recruitment of a Training and Exercising Officer (PC) which will greatly advantage the Resilience Team and support closing the gap around the outstanding review work.

5.3 Force Support Unit and Firearms Training

Q. In the last report the Firearms Training team were 3 instructors under establishment – is this still the case?

The Firearms Training Team currently has 4 NFI vacancies. It is becoming more difficult to recruit into these posts and work has been undertaken to look to understand why this is the case. Following a recruitment process two vacancies have been filled which is very pleasing. The new recruited National Firearms Instructors (NFI) are awaiting their respective training courses. There are a further two NFI posts currently vacant but OPC has worked hard to fill these vacancies and there is an internal transferee from another Command and an external transferee which will address this resourcing shortfall. This will bring us to establishment for NFIs.

In addition, it is worthy of noting that Chief Officers have supported the payment of a one-off Targeted Variable Payment (TVP) for PC rank NFIs of £2000 this coming financial year to assist with recruitment and retention of this hard to fill role.

Q. The FSU was 15 ARVOs under strength leading to cancelled leave and rest days – have the 15 vacancies been filled? Are rest days/leave still impacted?

The vacancy level has reduced by 2 Armed Response Vehicle Officers (ARVOs)s but the use of overtime and rest day working is still required to maintain the Armed Policing Strategic Threat and Risk Assessment (APSTRA). The Force has explored options to reduce the attrition on initial firearms course. This is a national problem and not specific to Essex.

The Initial Firearms Course (IFC) length has now decreased from 14 weeks to 11 weeks. As previously identified, the searching module, is where the majority of students fail. As such firearms training has undertaken a full review of their approach from a national and Seven Forces perspective to ensure the standards in training are correctly aligned.

There is an IFC currently running, and it is pleasing to see that currently the 12 students are all progressing well. There is a further IFC planned for September 2022.

Q. A modular approach to the IFC course was being explored – have any decisions been made about this and/or has anything progressed?

The viability and benefits of a modular IFC Course are still being discussed with the 7 Force Network. However, any move to modular training will decrease the number of Authorised Firearms Officers produced in the short term whilst this process was implemented.

5.4 Taser Governance

Q. Last report advised 636 Specialist Taser Officers (STOs), and on track for 737 by December – has this target been achieved?

The target for training 737 STOs has been achieved, although the exact number will always fluctuate as officers move roles or leave policing. OPC are proactively managing the training and administration required to maintain the 737 STO establishment.

There is now a clear governance process in place following all uses of Taser (red-dot or 'firing'), whereby the Taser Training Team conduct a review of the deployment using the Body Worn Video and officers' statement. In the event issues are identified there is a conversation between Professional Standards Department and the training team to consider the next steps, such as further training or potentially removal of the STO status. This is then fed through the Tactical 'Use of Force' meeting into the Force Board for Chief Officer oversight.

5.5 Stansted Airport

Q. New model implemented 1 August 2021 – how well is this working? Are there any concerns/issues?

The new model is working well, and all roles are currently filled. Negotiations have begun in relation to the new Police Services Agreement. The negotiations have the support of the Corporate Finance Department to provide the necessary commercial financial advice. An uplift of 8 officers, 1 dog, and a vehicle have been requested by Essex Police. The uplift in officers follows a local assessment which identified the need to increase patrolling resource to provide essential resilience in the event of a critical incident. The additional dog was identified by Manchester Airport Group (MAG) as a cheaper option to sustain the canine services as opposed to contract hire. The additional monies for the vehicle will allow for an upgraded off-road capability following a review of the response to a protest at Stansted Airport. Negotiations continue.

Q. Are passenger numbers still low and manageable?

Passenger numbers are beginning to increase with last week seeing 50,000 people pass through the airport in a single day. These numbers are very manageable from a policing perspective. Subject to any further restrictions on travel passenger numbers are expected to continue to rise.

Q. Are there still more deportation flights and if so, what is the impact on policing?

Deportation flights continue to take place from the north side of the airport via the private operators. Any additional policing costs are covered by the Home Office. The flights which the Home Office consider to be of a higher risk are allocated out across a number of UK airports.

5.6 Operational Support Group

Q. What are the key areas of focus for OSG activity in the next 6 months?

The OSG will be focussed on supporting Op Nightshade over the next six months. Op Nightshade is the Force wide operation seeking a multi-departmental effort to reduce high harm crime and its impact on communities. This includes proactive operations focussed on reducing high harm offences as well as carrying out arrests of those wanted for high harm crimes and proactive patrols of areas highlighted as vulnerable to high harm crimes.

The OSG will be supporting the South LPA with patrols of the waterfront areas of Southend as part of Op Union. This operation has been implemented to reduce violent crime in the Southend District and follow the learning from the positive work undertaken last Summer.

The only planned Mutual Aid event likely to take the OSG away from the county in the next six months will be the Commonwealth Games. The mutual aid request is still to be received for this operation.

5.7 Marine Unit

Q. What are the benefits of having the Personal Water Carrier (jet ski) gifted by Maldon District Council? Has ASB reduced as a result?

The Personal Watercraft (JetSki) provided by Maldon District has enabled the Marine Unit to enter previously inaccessible shallow and inlet water areas. This valuable asset has assisted the team in driving water related ASB down by 30% in some coastal areas and the focus of the Marine Unit over the next 12 months will be Operation WAVEBREAKER, an operation aimed at tackling ASB on the coastline and inlet water areas. Whilst an obvious objective of this operation is a reduction in ASB it should be borne in mind that monitoring ASB performance for water related incidents is challenging and this is something which the Unit are trying to develop.

The outcome of this operation will inform decisions about whether we seek to progress a Water Safety Scheme like that of the Driver Improvement Scheme. Similar to the Driver Improvement Scheme used to deal with motorists committing minor offences, the initiative would see users of vessels who are found to be committing ASB amounting to breaches of local bye-laws offered an alternative to prosecution by attending a Water Safety Scheme offered by the police. The user would pay a fee to attend the course which would be retained by Essex Police. If the pilot of the scheme is successful, then we will offer it as best practice to other forces as part of our responsibility as national lead for safe use of the water in England and Wales.

Q. Have there been any opportunities to use PSPOs on water yet?

The team are being encouraged to take a problem-solving oriented approach to their activity and work is currently underway in areas such as Colchester, Maldon and Southend around exploring opportunities for Public Spaces Protection Orders on the water and Essex are leading the way nationally around these conversations/tactics.

Q. Is there an update on the launch (ALERT IV) which is due for refurbishment, and when this might take place? Is there any impact on operations in the meantime?

The launch remains operational although it cannot be deployed in rough seas anymore. A business case is being prepared which will present a number of options including not having a launch and the purchase of a new vessel. The launch is unlikely to pass its recertification in October 2023 without an extensive refit.

5.8 Specialist Operations

Q. Has the uplift now been achieved (POLSA and LSO)?

The uplift has yet to be achieved with the current position being 11 Police Search Advisors (PoSAs) and 116 Licensed Search Officers (LSOs). This is against the Strategic Threat and Risk Assessment (STRA) levels of 14 PoSAs and 130 LSOs. A training course has been planned to bridge this gap.

Q. Has the target of 125 CBRN responders been reached yet?

A training course to achieve the 125 Chemical, Biological, Radioactive, Nuclear (CBRN) responders was postponed at the end of last year but has been rearranged for the spring. This will take the current figure of 110 responders to the target of 125.

Q. CBRN budget shortfall – Has this been resolved or does it remain an issue?

The previously identified budget shortfall has been rectified and the CBRN Department now has an annual budget of £45k to cover all repairs, servicing and purchasing associated with operational delivery.

5.9 Serious Violence Unit

Q. Are remand figures remaining high (last report stated 89% compared to 21% in previous three years)?

The number of suspects that have been remanded into custody remains high but has reduced since the last report. Since September 2021 142 people have been remanded by the teams out of the 228 arrests that were made. This equates to 62% of all those that are arrested by the SVU being remanded.

Q. Is sentencing also remaining higher (reported average 4.9 years up from 16.5 months)?

Research to look at average sentences was a standalone project and updated data is not available at this time. Care should be taken when looking at sentencing as this will be affected by the offending history of the subject.

Q. Is the PPP team in place and what impact is it having?

Examples of Triple P team interventions include two individuals being moved out of Essex due to exploitation by gangs/county lines, assistance with housing and funding provided. Other intervention has included Mental Health support being arranged, educational diversion and alcohol rehabilitation. Most of those the team are attempting to engage with are complex and heavily entrenched in drugs, gangs or county lines. The impact on the individuals concerned is significant and should not be underestimated. Despite this, the uptake to date has been positive and the below diagram gives a snapshot of activity in December 2021.



5.10 Public Order Training

Q. Do we have the required number of public order silver and bronze commanders?

We currently have 8 Public Order Silver Commanders against a requirement of 12. We have an additional three Commanders who have completed their course and are working towards their accreditation. We also have two officers attending their Public Order Silver course next month.

We currently have 10 accredited Public Order Bronze Commanders against a requirement of 12. We have an additional two Commanders who have completed their course and are working towards their accreditation. One officer is currently on their Bronze Commander course.

Essex has sufficient Commanders at this time to manage the number of incidents / events going forward.

6.0 Implications (Issues) by exception

There is nothing by exception to add.

7.0 Links to Police and Crime Plan Priorities

This is a half-yearly update and therefore this section does not require completing.

8.0 Demand

This is a half-yearly update and therefore this section does not require completing.

9.0 Risks/Mitigation

There are no OPC risks that need to be recorded in this update.

10.0 Equality and/or Human Rights Implications

None identified.

11.0 Health and Safety Implications

None identified.

12.0 Consultation/Engagement

The OPC Command Team along with subject matter experts have been consulted in the production of this paper.

13.0 Actions for Improvement

There are no existing AFIs for OPC.