

Performance and Resources Scrutiny Programme 2021

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 around District Engagement Plans.

2.0 **Recommendations**

For the Board to note the content.

3.0 **Executive Summary**

The Office of the PFCC provided specific questions and requested that this update purely focussed on these questions.

4.0 **Introduction/Background**

The specific questions asked, will be answered within Section 5 of this report.

5.0 **Current Work and Performance**

5.1 Communities

Q. How do you identify the communities that you need to engage with?

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Districts do this through their Community Safety Partnership (CSP), Independent Advisory Group (IAG), Parish and District councils, Non-governmental Organisations (NGO's) 2011 census, school admissions data, community leaders/champions, engagement events, local knowledge and visibility. For example, in Colchester they are working with Refugee Action and a local Orthodox church to engage with communities resettling in their district. In Southend, communities have been identified following national incidents (such as terrorist attacks), this has led to strong links within their Muslim community.

Q. How do you know that you reach all of these communities?

For the majority of districts feedback is sought through IAG's, Essex Police Public Perceptions Survey, social media insights and comments, Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC), newsletters and face to face engagement. In Braintree and Uttlesford, engagement logs are completed following an event and reviewed by the CPT Inspector to evaluate impact.

Our Crime and Public Protection command have introduced a quarterly Community Engagement Group, designed to deliver targeted engagement to diverse groups which research suggests are at higher risk of being a victim of serious sexual offences or of underreporting. Representatives from Black, Asian, Ethnic Minority groups, women and girls, LGBTQIA+ and young people are invited to attend from across Essex. Feedback is sought from attendees to understand reach and identify further engagement opportunities.

Q. How do you fit engagement activities to these communities?

To fit our engagement activities to the communities that we serve, districts have worked hard to build links with leaders and attended their events by invitation to learn and understand how we can tailor our engagement to them.

Using what has gone well previously to ensure success at future engagements. For example, the Marine Unit have tailored their engagement to the marine and coastal community, by linking in with the Harbour masters and relevant stakeholders. In Thurrock, officers have worked with the NHS to attend traveller sites when offering Covid vaccinations. These have been conducted in and out of uniform to help ease tensions and allow them to start a conversation.

Q. The Police and Crime Plan (page 13) commits to '*Recognise and welcome the increased diversity of Essex and invest in ways to work together with all communities to prevent crime by encouraging reporting, identifying problem areas and targeting prevention activity.*' What reassurance can you provide that the force is connected to, engaged with, and hearing from all of the diverse communities across Essex?

The diversity within Essex is ever evolving and the number of communities we are engaging with is constantly growing. Each district consistently looks for new ways to engage using our Listen, Act and Tell model.

A number of districts have identified that a key way to connect with diverse communities is through successful IAG engagement. In Brentwood and Epping Forest, they created a campaign together with the media and communications team to promote the group and attract key individuals. This went hand in hand with direct engagement with key community leaders to help break down barriers and promote what the group do for the local area. Having an IAG that reflects each districts community enables it to act as a critical friend and helps to identify gaps.

Each district collates information for their regular newsletters, this is then sent out to an increasing list of contacts. Each district will be moving across to an e-newsletter shortly in line with the Essex Police Dispatch e-newsletter which can be read by screen readers, therefore more accessible to those with a vision impairment. This will also ensure a broader reach and we will work with Contact Management to push the district-based Dispatch e-newsletter out during interactions with the public.

Ultimately, we cannot be certain that we are reaching and engaging with every community. To tackle this, we are building a community contacts list to understand who we are engaging with as a Force. Each contact will have an owner and they act as a conduit, for example if Southend are looking for a contact within the Chinese community, they will approach the owner of any relevant contacts. The owner will reach out and ask if they know of and can introduce a relevant contact in the Southend area. This will ensure that there is one point of contact and they maintain this relationship.

Q4 survey results tell us that 79% think Police in their area are doing a good excellent job, this is in comparison to 56% for the MSG (most recent results, March 2020).

A Stop & Search scrutiny panel is now in place and is attended by a number of IAG members where they view body worn video footage of recent stop searches that have been carried out. This allows our community to view and help us learn and develop from our interactions with those within the community who are subject of the use of stop and search powers.

5.2 Partners and Stakeholders

Q. How do you identify and work with partners and stakeholders, including:

- District Councillors
- County Councillors
- Other elected representatives

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Each district commander is in direct contact with local MP's and council leaders. Work is identified through Community Safety Partnerships, local community meetings or as a result of direct contact.

District councillors are engaged with at local meetings, via the Community Policing Team and regular newsletters. Following a significant incident, investigators from the Serious Crime Directorate engage with councillors and representatives via the Gold Group to provide reassurance and updates.

Local Councils and Councillors are well integrated into our local engagement activity, and we work with them to solve issues.

Engagement with County Councillors varies across the districts, for example in Braintree and Uttlesford, both Essex County Council Councillors hold other portfolios and are engaged with through local events at Parish and District level. In Harlow and Basildon, County Councillors are sighted on local updates but don't meet regularly outside of this. This engagement is highlighted at the Public Engagement Star Chamber and shared through the District Commander Forum. Where any gaps are identified, the district commanders work with their local councils to improve the engagement and where it is felt there is room for improvement, actions are given and tracked. All councillors have access to their relevant Team through the Community Policing Team (CPT) inbox. A number of the CPT's in Essex are based within a CSP hub/Local Council building, meaning they are in direct contact on a daily basis.

Q. What engagement do you have with Essex County Council representatives?

Engagement with Essex County Council representatives for most districts comes in the form of regular updates via local newsletters. There is engagement outside of this and relates to larger projects e.g., the Free Port development in Harwich and Northern Gateway in Colchester.

Our Operational Policing Command engage with ECC representatives through Safety Advisory Groups.

The Rural Engagement Team works with the Essex County Council Traveller Unit on a regular basis ensuring a proportionate and appropriate response to unauthorised encampments and trespass incidents.

A gap was previously identified with the engagement in the Chelmsford & Maldon district with ECC councillors and but this has been resolved through inclusion in the newsletter circulation and following a meeting an agreement for a catch up meeting every 6 months and contact between times should the need arise.

Q. What are the challenges around this?

There are only limited challenges with this. One area of note is that on occasion councillors seek data for their areas within their political wards which do not always fit with the data sets that we provide. This leads to variances in data and can impact upon the perception of crime in their ward. However, the local level detail that the officers have within the Community Policing Teams ensures they are able to reflect the true issues in their areas and manage these conversations.

Another challenge is managing expectations around timescales and policing priorities as there is an expectation that all issues raised will be dealt with immediately regardless of the threat, harm and risk posed. This is addressed through building good relationships with the relevant parties, so they understand how Essex Police responds to incidents in line with our Force policies and our daily priorities to promote better understanding.

Q. What reassurance can you provide that they are well integrated and involved in our local engagement activity? If not, what needs to change to achieve this?

Local Councils and Councillors are well integrated into our local engagement activity, and we work with them to solve issues. In Colchester, Councillors regularly join officers for engagement activities from 'Stroll with a patrol' to nights of action. In Thurrock, there are strong links with council representatives, an issue was raised by a local councillor and community meeting arranged. This discussion identified a problem affecting the local Nepalese community and following an investigation an arrest was made. Centrally, a weekly update is collated specifically for Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) and disseminated to the Chairman's, Councillors, Clerks and Partners.

It is felt that better engagement can be achieved with Essex County Council representatives through a diarised schedule and agenda to co-ordinate engagement.

Q. How do you use this engagement to amplify the messages and concerns of residents?

All engagement follows a Listen, Act, Tell model. A key part of engagement is amplifying our 'you said, we did' messaging (Tell). This is promoted through social media channels, word of mouth, newsletters and partners. By engaging local councillors, this supports the wider understanding of the activity being completed by local teams and encourages them to vocalise our activity with their constituents.

Q. How will you work with CSPs to understand priorities and local issues?

CPT Inspectors attend regular CSP meetings where local concerns are identified through information and data sharing. This is used to identify key issues and agree priorities, which are allocated and monitored through tasking and briefings. These meetings allow the CSP to identify which agency is best placed to progress the tactical activity and lead on that work. This enables a true partnership approach to problem solving.

The districts are in contact with their CSPs on a weekly, and in some areas, daily basis and are well-integrated. Information is shared with each other in order to enable a joint approach to problem solving.

In Chelmsford, the CSP is a key driver in local tasking and the district commander has direct involvement in the writing of the council's priorities. In Basildon, they attend a daily tasking meeting and monthly multi-agency tasking meeting with the CSP bringing partners in on community safety through tasking and holding to account. There is a bi-weekly joint communications strategy meeting which shapes future press releases and media strategy towards messaging to the public.

5.3 Approach and effectiveness

Q. What tactics and engagement activities are effective? How do you know that they are effective?

Districts have seen success by attending pre-existing events, often being held by partners or community groups. This presents an opportunity for officers to engage with a guaranteed audience, in key locations. Due to the number of attendees and feedback received, it is believed to be effective. In Castle Point and Rochford, feedback is sought following each engagement with a 'Your Views Count' survey. This information is used to identify effective events.

Twice a year, District Commanders present at the Public Engagement Star Chamber, which includes a panel of senior officers and key external partners. Two examples of these presentations, one from Colchester district and one from Basildon district are attached at **Appendix A**. Their presentations include district engagement priorities, successes and future activity, as well as the most recent public perception survey results. This is an opportunity for the Force to understand what each district has undertaken to improve public confidence and pose questions on the effectiveness of their efforts and how further improvements may be made. Actions are recorded and progress monitored at each meeting.

Social media provides a platform for each district to promote their local activities and is a way to gauge the local community's perception. From the insights available, districts are able to identify effective posts and the effort involved in creating content is minimal. This is also a channel used by central commands to promote their work and prevent messaging.

Local newsletters allow the districts to promote their local activity through their Key Individuals Network (KIN's). This extends the updates on local activity to non-social media users. In Southend it is believed this reaches around 70,000 residents thanks to NHW, Southend Council, housing associations and others. We have seen the impact of this mirrored in the percentage of residents who feel informed.

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In Basildon and Castle Point and Rochford, through analysing data ASB hot spots are identified and this information is used to create a patrol plan for the relevant area. This is a visual tool for officers to use to target specific areas to offer reassurance, prevent crime and gather intel. Feedback from individuals shows our efforts are appreciated and comparison figures shows a 35% decrease in reports for Castle Point and Rochford (January 2022 to February 2022).

We are working with the districts to standardise the way in which each engagement event is recorded. This is so that we can collect data to evaluate the effectiveness, identify ways to improve and best practice. This includes audience size, feedback from attendees, concerns raised and the action we have taken.

Q. What have you done as a result?

Where it has been identified that engagement is not effective, districts have adjusted their approach. For example, in Colchester, Coffee with Cops was not well attended. The district has now introduced stroll with a patrol, where officers go to a specific location and residents can join a patrol to discuss issues in the area. This has seen a positive reaction and increased attendance. In Southend it was identified that online Q&A sessions were not successful due to the lack of engagement. This has been replaced with further pop-up events and Coffee with Cops.

Q. How do you share information between districts?

A District Commanders Forum has been introduced, meeting quarterly to discuss engagement and share best practice.

Community Safety Engagement Officers attend a Development Day every quarter, where officers share what's working well and inputs are given to build on knowledge.

There is a quarterly teams call with the Force Engagement Lead to discuss current activities as well as a Teams chat where information can be shared in real time.

There is a Public Engagement OneNote which holds a library of information for all to refer to, including information on best practice.

The Community Contacts List is a register of key contacts in each district that can be accessed by all and used to establish connections with emerging communities.

Q. What has been the impact of Community Safety Engagement Officers (CSEOs)?

The impact of the Community Safety Engagement Officers and the work that they do has been invaluable.

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It has meant that engagement activities have been consistent, well-co-ordinated and adapted to the needs of their district. They act as a point of contact, improving links with partners CSP's, councillors and residents. Their work has helped to increase reach and close gaps in engagement. In Brentwood and Epping Forest, they provide data to front line officers advising on hot spot locations and where to target policing activity. This role has allowed CPT officers to tackle offenders and investigations.

It has allowed us to focus on the ways in which we inform the public of our policing activities, understanding what reach each method has and establishing how partners can support. This focus has led to an increased presence on social media, regular local newsletters and has improved our reach through supporting partners.

The CSEO's support with long term problem solving, using insights and partner information to create a full picture and plan a response. In Thurrock, following prolonged ASB issues in Grays High Street, through partnership working, controls were put in place to improve the area. These included an increase in CCTV, street lighting and 9 engagement events all of which led to a reduction in ASB and offenders engaging with services.

For the Operational Policing Command, the role has ensured their activities are highlighted and teams can support districts by providing increased reassurance and visibility to the public in the right place and the right time.

Q. Where has this worked well?

In Basildon, it was identified through data and feedback from the local community that a local business was being targeted with anti-social behaviour from a group. The officers identified that this was happening between 3pm and 9pm on a daily basis. Using this information, targeted patrols, engagement events and discussions with key partners, the suspects were identified and relevant action was taken. The assistance of the CSEO's meant that a full picture was built and connected relevant partners to come to a positive resolution.

In Braintree, the CSEO worked with our Performance Analysis Unit to identify the top ten locations for all crimes that resources were repeatedly attending. This information was presented to partners to look at longer term problem solving. Action was taken to support victims, providing a better service, with the aim of reducing their impact on the force. This piece of work has seen reduction in reports from these individuals and improved the quality of life in the surrounding area.

The learning is then shared across all CSEOs and PAU are now looking to produce the same data for each district to ensure there is a consistent multi-agency problem solving approach across the force.

Q. What examples are there of where it has worked less well and where lessons have been learned?

Lessons have been learned around what the public would like to see on our social media channels. It is clear from the insights that some posts have had a negative impact and we have had to work hard to counteract. The key messaging from this is that we understand our audience, what they want to see and to share this across the districts. In Castle Point and Rochford, a reassurance post was created following a report of an accosting. This wasn't necessary as the incident itself was resolved quickly however it generated a feeling of panic within the local community and required further reassurance messages in liaison with the press office.

In Colchester, following the launch of their local newsletter, feedback was received that it was not inclusive of all areas. Villages in the district did not see themselves as Colchester, and the CSEO's have been intrinsic, working with Parish Councillors to understand. The document has evolved to meet their needs and deliver news on a truly local level.

5.4 Examples of activity

Q. What examples can you provide of engagement activity that has helped to show tangible evidence of increased public confidence?

Essex Police Marine Unit officers are responsible for engagement in a specific coastal location. This has included engagement events, joining relevant CPT events, attending specific marine events (regattas, sailing events and festivals) and a quarterly newsletter distributed through key contacts.

Following this activity, a survey was carried out and disseminated on social media and through local contacts. This had more than 300 responses and showed that over 34% of residents felt that policing of the marine community had improved in the last two years, 47% answered neither agree nor disagree or didn't know, and 19% disagreed.

Districts have worked hard to improve the ways in which they inform residents of our policing activities. Through social media, newsletters, the contacts built through the CSEO's, partners and alongside the work of our Media and Communications team we have seen an overall improvement.

Q4 SMSR results report that 44% of residents feel informed about what the Police in their area are doing (very/fairly informed), this is significantly more than that of the Most Similar Group with 37% feeling informed. Although we cannot say that our efforts have had a direct impact, in absence of any other reason, we believe this to have been the impact.

Engagement activities provide local residents with direct access to our Community Policing Teams. Through the CSEO's they are consistent and the feedback from attendees has been positive. In Brentwood and Epping Forest, an engagement tracker is completed following every event, the concerns raised and action taken is recorded. This information is used to understand their success and any impact on local confidence. We are working with the districts to ensure this is standard practice and qualitative data is recorded.

Operation Union was established to utilise partners to increase visibility in key areas of Southend following a dramatic increase in footfall and incidents of serious violence. Conducting joint intelligence led patrols, knife arch operations and engaging with the public, promoting our activity on social media and providing regular updates to key contacts. The feedback received from the public was positive and visitors were reassured by the police presence, with 67% of respondents surveyed reporting they noticed an increase in police presence. There was a noticeable reduction in serious violence and disorder, and 63% of those surveyed felt safe whilst visiting the area.

A benchmarking request has been made to all Forces, to understand how they evaluate engagement and its impact on public confidence. Where best practice is identified, we will look to replicate across the county.

Q. What examples can you give that have driven management of a crisis/incident with potential to have a negative impact on public confidence?

In Harlow, Op Pine was the investigation into a murder in late 2021. The CSEO managed engagement with stakeholders ensuring they were fully briefed and understood the patrol plans in place and encouraged them to conduct joint patrols to negate the negative impact an incident like this can have on the local area. By fully engaging partners they were able to echo our message and promote the action taken.

In Braintree, there were reports on social media that a spate of burglaries had occurred and the relevant investigations had been closed. The Community Policing Team picked up on the tension in the area and were able to reopen the investigation. This instigated service recovery for victims, a suspect was identified, arrested and remanded for 34 offences.

5.5 Aspirations and future

Q. The Forces capacity to engage with communities has improved significantly since introduction of Strategy. What are the aspirations of the Force in terms of engagement and how will they know if they are reaching these and what actions will be taken to drive this?

As a Force we want to improve our reach, engaging in effective ways and further understand the communities we serve.

Improve visibility through partners and key contacts by echoing our message and increasing our reach.

Continue sharing best practice and build knowledge through the District Commander Forum and CSEO Development Days. Here we will identify marginal gains to ensure that our efforts are effective and we continue to learn.

Crime and Public Protection are leading on improving victim satisfaction which in turn will impact overall confidence results. A Victim Closure Template is being trialled in the North LPA to help identify victim satisfaction and areas to improve.

The Public Perception Survey will be a key indicator that our efforts are impacting the local community. Further work will be undertaken by CSEO's to identify marginal gains and evaluate impact.

A revised engagement strategy is being written in line with the new Force plan and will consider the questions posed in this document. It will include how to best demonstrate marginal gains and improvements in engagement.

We are also looking to improve our engagement with Essex County councillors across the board by working to understand their requirements and how we can improve that engagement. This will be monitored through the Star Chamber process.

5.6 IAG Engagement

Q. What is the role of IAGs in relation to Community Safety Partnerships and how do the two interact?

CSP and IAG interaction varies across each district as CSP attendance at IAGs is not compulsory and is not included in the new IAG terms of reference. All CSPs are invited to join their IAGs and while some chose not to, others took a different approach understanding that the IAG can provide links into local communities and help support their day-to-day work.

The Tendring CSP manager is the local IAG Chair and is a great constant for the district. The Thurrock CSP manager has for the last twelve years provided admin in her own time for the IAG. The CSP manager works closely with the district commander and has the right blend of police, council and community and the manager recently organised a meeting with the district commander, CSEOs, the council, IAG Chair and CSE Co-Ordinator to discuss what we might do collaboratively to build and encourage, new communities to join the IAG. The focus is to move away from lists of data and presenters who deliver power points but keen to still retain the important police annual updates like Prevent.

Several CSP managers attend their local IAGs as participants, taking actions and supplying information for community attendees. The Chelmsford and Maldon CSP manager is a great advocate and helped with the district IAG relaunch. He actively

encourages local communities/organisations to join the IAG and links in with members outside the IAG.

Whilst a few CSPs don't attend their IAG they do provide admin support at no cost to Essex Police, which ensures all colleagues are sighted on local discussions and concerns.

The Colchester IAG is an external organisation and has no CSP links and the CEO of Community 360 is the local IAG Chair.

Q. What is the role of IAGs in relation to specialist areas of work such as business crime and child protection?

The Business Crime Team Inspector attended the Thurrock IAG in January 2022, talked through a presentation, explaining what and how the Business Crime Team are delivering and their priorities. During the event the inspector spoke about Business Watch alongside the wider improvements to CCTV and street lighting, offering reassurance to communities whilst providing an important link to the new VAWG Strategy.

The Thurrock IAG Chair is also the SIAG Chair so suggested he link in with other IAGs across Essex to ensure better understanding across the county. This is ongoing.

The Business Crime team have also set up a Business Advisory Group. The purpose of this group is as follows:

- *The group has been set up to act as a conduit for local businesses in their areas to express views or make comments around Policing practices.*
- *The members will disseminate information provided by the Business Crime Team to a wider business audience.*
- *The group will work together to discuss better working practices between Police and businesses in Essex*

Whilst this falls outside of the IAG role, there are clear overlaps between the two and moving forwards there will be greater correlation between the two.

In relation to child protection matters, the Strategic IAG chair has been invited to meet with leads from the Crime and Public Protection command to discuss how they see the IAGs supporting their work.

Our IAGs are extremely supportive across Essex and it should be recognised how much the IAGs support the varied work of Essex Police. They support through IAGs, through the new Stop and Search review panel, the FCR review panel and also now the PSD review panel. Members are invited to attend Gold Groups for incidents where there is a

significant impact on the local community, offering support and advice. For example, following a recent domestic homicide, members were invited to the Op Puffin gold group. This is a huge commitment and where some of these areas can be streamlined we will look to do that. However, it is reflective of the great support and network we have with our communities that they are interested in supporting Essex Police around all of these areas.

6.0 Implications (Issues)

The specific questions have been answered in section 5 and therefore this section does not require completing.

7.0 Links to Police and Crime Plan Priorities

The specific questions have been answered in section 5 and therefore this section does not require completing.

8.0 Demand

The specific questions have been answered in section 5 and therefore this section does not require completing.

9.0 Risks/Mitigation

There are no risks that need to be recorded.

10.0 Equality and/or Human Rights Implications

None identified.

11.0 Health and Safety Implications

None identified.

7.0 Consultation/Engagement

District Commanders along with other subject matter experts have been consulted in the production of this paper.

8.0 Actions for Improvement

There are no existing AFI's.

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

The specific questions have been answered in section 5 and therefore this section does not require completing.

Appendix A



Colchester Star
Chamber March 22 V



PE Star Chamber -
Presentation Basildon