

## Performance and Resources Scrutiny Programme 2023

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

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### 1.0 Purpose of Report

This report provides a 6-month update on the work undertaken by Operational Policing Command.

### 2.0 Recommendations

The PFCC is invited to note the updates provided by the Command

### 3.0 Executive Summary

The Operational Policing Command is a county-wide function delivering a range of specialist and support functions for Essex Police.

The Serious Violence Unit continues to pursue the most dangerous drug lines in Essex. Over the last 6 months our teams have seen 286 arrests with over 190 searches and 169 offenders charged and remanded, supported by a move away from the Hampshire to a MORiLE risk assessment process that allows a more holistic determination. The unit's **Prevent, Prepare and Protect (PPP) Team** has

introduced new initiatives to better protect vulnerable adults and children impacted by drug lines, including the Knife Crime Violence Model, child trafficking referral systems and improved signposts to partner agencies. The team are also progressing innovations around social media through the BT Hothouse programme.

The **Operational Support Group** has increased its contribution towards the targeted policing of identified violence hotspots by 512%, whilst also making 796 arrests, 140 of which are forcewide taskings. The team has also made significant contributions across the force, including policing recent protest activity, policing the World Cup night-time economy and supporting the Christmas drink drive campaign. The OSG will shortly be trained as dispatchers in FCR, giving greater resilience to support that critical area of business, whilst mindful of the potential to detract from their contribution to preventing and detecting high harm offences.

Within Specialist Operations the **Marine Section** continues to provide a visible policing presence and engagement with marine communities, albeit this has been more limited by the loss of the marine launch due to health and safety concerns (fire suppression system). A business case for a new launch will shortly be presented at the Strategic Board. The force's **Search** capability continues to excel, with outstanding support to a murder investigation in Harlow, however, challenges with recruitment to these specialist roles present a risk for the year ahead. The **Drones** team have seen increasing calls for service, in support of operations and intelligence development. Our **CBRN** capability will shortly increase with the training of all ARV officers and imminent delivery of their equipment.

The **Dog Section** has seen a recent reduction in capability, particularly in relation to firearms support dogs (reduced from 10 to 2). This will be addressed through further training later in the year. The section has also seen a marked increase in the number of dangerous dog seizures following increased awareness training and the surfeit of dog ownership through the pandemic period. This is placing significant pressure on allocated budgets, with limited cost recovery.

The number of people killed (+1) and seriously injured (+84) has increased in 2022 vs 2021 as traffic returns to normal following the pandemic. Our **Roads Policing Units** continue to respond to and investigate road traffic collisions and other road traffic offences. Since April, 7,433 road traffic offences have been prosecuted under a safer roads campaign, including mobile phone use, excess speed, seat belt wearing, plus 129 arrests.

Over the last 6 months the Operations Centre (**Ops Planning** and the **Resource Management Unit**) has supported 235 operations, including (M25 protests, the passing of HRH Queen Elizabeth, Clacton Airshow, Waltham Abbey music festival, and demand based Southend seafront patrols. There are 32 planned operations for 2023 already including the King's coronation. Learning from previous protest deployments last year mean that we are better placed to deal with any recurrence and to support the force in the event of spontaneous protest activity. The team have also developed an annual planner that highlights periods of peak demand and resourcing challenges to allow the force to better plan for and mitigate these periods.

The armed policing strategic threat and risk assessment (STRA) has recently been reviewed and the force will shortly using armed officers from Stansted airport to ensure the STRA is achieved. The **Force Support Unit (FSU)** continues to operate with vacancies and an intense training programme that has required regular use of overtime to ensure ARV numbers are maintained. Planned changes to the initial firearms course, progression along the firearms pathway and proactive recruitment will ensure we can meet the new ARV numbers without recourse to overtime. **Stansted Airport** has recently agreed an uplift of 5 officers who will be deployed as part of a re-imagined Community Policing Team at the airport that will ensure that best practice from local policing areas is applied in the aviation setting.

Operational Policing Command has a new command team with a clear ambition for how we operate and deliver against the force plan. New tasking processes, better planning and preparedness, more effective governance of allocated budgets and a focus on developing our incident command capabilities are just some of the key areas of focus for the team. There are a number of identified risks, not least to our ability to best support Operation Nightshade; resilience and capacity within armed policing; emergency planning and resourcing and funding areas like search and dangerous dogs, but there are mitigating actions in place and the command remains committed to providing an outstanding service to the public.

#### **4.0 Introduction/Background**

This report is a 6-month update to the annual deep dive report, presented to the board in September 2022. The Command were asked to provide an overview against the following questions:

- What is new?
- What has changed?
- What are you going to do about it?
- What is the resource implication?
- What is the impact on the public?

These questions have been addressed within the structured template of this report.

#### **5.0 Current Work and Performance**

OPC is a diverse command with a range of operating units. The current work and performance are therefore broken down against each unit.

##### **Serious Violence Unit**

Our Op Raptor and Op Orochi teams provide a force-wide response in preventing, dismantling, and disrupting violent drugs lines who cause harm to communities. During the last 6 months, the force has adopted the MoRiLE high harm scoring matrix for drug lines, moving away from the Hampshire matrix. This change allows the team to continue to target the most harmful drugs lines, whilst allowing a balanced assessment of risk across all control strategy priorities. The teams continue to impact on serious violence by targeting those lines who use violence and exploitation as part of their business model. The last 6 months have seen 286

arrests with over 190 searches and 169 offenders charged and remanded. The team's performance has remained on par with the previous 6 months, despite abstractions to other organisational priorities, such as Just Stop Oil protests.

Over the coming 6 months our enforcement capability will improve with the introduction of new drug testing equipment. TruNarc is a Home Office approved innovation that will identify controlled drugs quickly and accurately away from Police premises. The equipment will simplify the evidential journey by reducing time delays and costs associated with laboratory submissions and will bring defendants before courts more quickly, improving the protection afforded to the public.

Incorporated within Operational Policing Command are teams who work with partners in a 'public health approach' to try and prevent violence and young people from joining or being affiliated to gangs through active community engagement and partnership working. A 'Whole System Approach' is being adopted through the work and activity of safeguarding Officers. The aim is to ensure that a contextual safeguarding mindset is adopted alongside enforcement activity, working with our partners to engage with those involved in risky situations at a reachable moment. A new process provides vulnerable adults with a link to a website which provides a list of support services, safety advice and other agencies to contact to seek help. In addition to the offer of support, there are opportunities to pass information through to Essex Police or Crimestoppers. This approach has been developed over the last six months and the next few months will see greater engagement with partners prior to enforcement activity, to improve their capacity to take advantage or reachable moments.

The Knife Crime Violence Model (KCVM) utilises an algorithm to identify a cohort of young adults that are at higher risk of committing knife based Serious Violence offences. Evaluation of the pilot in three districts demonstrated that partnership interventions had been effective and reduced the predicted levels of violence within the cohort. The pilot has been extended further and will focus on Southend in the coming months.

OPC also has a response to identify missing persons that are being exploited by drugs lines. In a joint operation with Missing Persons Liaison Officers, a process has been introduced where those missing and suspected of being exploited are now referred to be investigated for any links to criminality. The recent introduction of this process has seen successful investigations conducted and the charging of offenders for Modern Slavery offences.

The SVU is also in the initial stages of developing work to identify on-line offending by drugs lines, not only targeting those that commit drugs supply and violence on-line, but also to identify those that exploit the vulnerable. This is being developed through the BT Hothouse initiative.

## **Operational Support Group (OSG)**

Over the last 6 months OSG have made a total of 796 arrests, 140 of which are force taskings, targeting suspects wanted for high harm offences. The command has improved the internal response to force arrest taskings and how this priority is presented in the force's Daily Management Meeting. This has resulted in fewer redeployments and improved performance against this force priority area.

The OSG were effectively tasked to support the World Cup and Christmas drink and drug driving campaign. They focussed their proactivity around the areas identified as hotspots of violence and made 75 arrests relating to drink or drug driving offences. Over the last 6 months they have supported our road safety priority with 129 vehicle seizures for no insurance and 87 additional road-related prosecutions.

In October 2022 the OSG were directed to provide greater support to violence hotspot zones. This focus has delivered a 512% improvement (57 patrols in September vs 349 in December) and provided tangible support to LPAs in efforts to reduce violence crime. In the last 6 months OSG have carried out 796 Stop and Searches, 225 of which had positive outcomes, and submitted 751 intelligence reports. Targeted area returns demonstrate an increasing amount of this activity has been delivered in those zones. To further improve the effectiveness of their deployments, OSG have a new piece of equipment called [Opengate](#). This is a portable walkthrough weapons detector, which can be deployed with behavioural detection officers to help us arrest those persons carrying weapons.

OSG supported the force response to Queen Elizabeth II's Funeral, being utilised as a public order contingency. The team have also been heavily involved in JSO protests. As part of this operation, roles covered by the team included protest removal teams, PSU Capability, Tactical Advisors as well as officers trained to work at heights.

OSG were significantly involved in the police response for the football World Cup in Essex. The team provided a Bronze, POPSA and Public Order support for all fixtures in November and December. The team also provided support to the LPA'S on New Year's Eve as a Public Order and general support team across Essex.

## **Marine Section**

The Marine unit have seen increased activity with JSO protests during the last six months and have been involved in providing a marine capability and tactical advice to the commanders.

As a result of a proactive stop check by the unit, an Albanian Organised Crime Group were found to be operating a people smuggling operation out of Brightlingsea. This developed and resulted in the unit working closely with Border Force and the NCA, supporting them with the arrest of several suspects. This was an excellent piece of work as an Organised Crime Group from Birmingham was subsequently dismantled as a result of these key arrests.

As part of being more accessible to the marine community, the team also taken on the mantle of investigating all reported marine crime or non-crime investigations. This is so that the marine community have a point of contact and someone from the marine unit investigating their crimes.

The team have conducted 138 hours patrol on the Launch, 243 hours on the RHIB and also 171 hours of shore-based patrols around marinas and the marine community. With access to a second PWC to assist with ASB, the Marine Unit have adopted a Community Policing Team approach to serving the marine communities, providing a more visible and accessible policing provision within the marine community and with the RHIB and PWC in operation, they are now more visible in the community.

On New Year's Eve a murder investigation centred around a lake in Harlow commenced. The Marine Unit were deployed on the day to assist with body retrieval and have since been deployed each day to manage and conduct the search of the lake and associated streams as part of the murder investigation.

### **Drone Team**

The Drone team proved themselves a significant asset during JSO protests. They have provided an operational overview for the Gold and Silver Commanders in the specialist operations room. They also provide support to the investigations capturing critical information and evidencing the disruption the protest causes.

### **CBRN**

Training has been undertaken in the last 6 months to train 120 Armed Response Vehicle Officer's (ARVO's). Training is now complete, and we await the live suits to be provided by the National CBRN Centre (NCBRNC). A 2-day refresher course is to take place in 2023 with the ARVO's along with refresher training for 50 responders and 75 enhanced responders (OSG).

### **Dog Section**

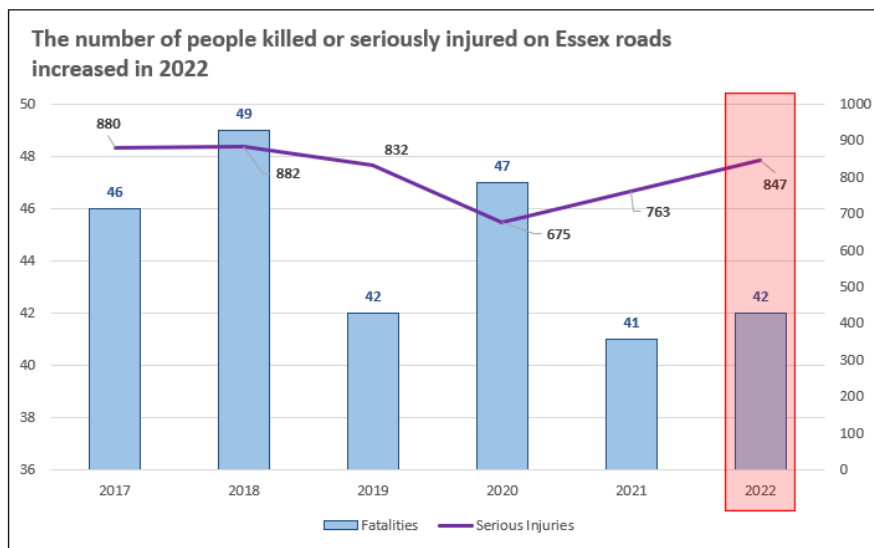
The team provides 24/7 support to front line policing, targeting active organised crime groups and criminals together with providing specialist search dog support to the wider force and region. The team have 21 general purpose dogs when up to full strength (currently 18 but basic course is ongoing). The section deploys 3 Forensic Recovery Dogs (FRD) trained to detect bodily fluids and body recovery. The team also operates 5 explosive trained dogs, servicing both planned and spontaneous deployments. The explosive dogs have performed 116 searches in the six-month period compared to 77 searches over the whole of 2021. The team have assisted investigatory departments in conducting 10 searches over the six months, down considerably from the 48 searches in the whole of 2021. This is in part down to a number of long running search operations that have grouped the individual searches into one operation and a period where the number of FRD handlers was reduced. The ongoing basic course will ensure the team achieves full strength of general purpose dogs which will enable the team to meet demand.

The section deploys 7 drug/cash/weapon recovery dogs deploying in a proactive capacity to planned warrants supporting Raptor teams and community policing to target OCGs throughout the county. The team has assisted with 161 searches in this six-month period which is in line with the 321 in the previous year, recovering large sums of cash, weapons, and drugs.

The section has 5 Explosive trained dogs embedded on the training team, servicing both planned and spontaneous deployments for suspicious packages and venue searches. The team have performed 116 searches in the six-month period compared to 77 searches over the whole of 2021. This large increase is likely due to the nature of large national deployments requiring this specialism – Commonwealth games, Climate Conference and HRH Queen Elizabeth’s funeral which all required a high volume of explosive searches.

### Roads Policing

The number of people killed on Essex roads increased by 1 in 2022, compared with 2021. The number of serious injuries increased more significantly, by 84 (+11%). This is the highest number of KSIs since 2018 and is likely to reflect increased road use following the peak of the Coronavirus pandemic.



Set against several challenges, Roads Policing response to calls for service, declined during 2022, when compared to 2021. During 2022, a total of 35,655 incidents were responded to compared to 38,433 during 2021. The context of this reduction is high levels of abstraction to Op Hazel and Operation London Bridge as well as regular support to the FCR. Q3 of the performance year, shows an increase in incidents attended and arrests, reflecting a return to satisfactory staffing levels and a reduction of staff supporting other policing priorities.

Essex Police continue to be a key partner of the Safer Essex Roads Partnership Road Safety (SERP). This board allows all partners from Local authorities, highways, fire, ambulance and the PFCC to work together to drive work to reduce the number of deaths and serious injuries on Essex Roads. Recent initiatives delivered by the SERP board are funding for an unmarked Police motor bike to aid enforcement and

engagement and a university led research programme to understand action and behaviours towards road safety which will then allow targeted work to be carried out.

The dedicated Safer Essex Roads Partnership Road Safety Operation continues to be successful by working with our partners from the local authorities, with focused activity from Roads Policing officers and ever-increasing involvement by local policing areas. The operation is also supported by the wider Essex Police family to ensure engagement and enforcement activities are not limited to just Roads Policing.

Since April, 7,433 road traffic offences have been prosecuted, including mobile phone use, excess speed, seat belt wearing, plus 129 arrests.

The number of people killed and seriously injured, because of a road traffic collision, has returned to pre covid pandemic levels, and reflects increasing challenges around vulnerable road users, such as Motorcyclists and e scooter riders.

The next reporting period will reflect an uplift to the number of Police officers who can perform their duty riding a Police m/cycle. An uplift of 8 officers will enable a higher level of presence on known motorcycle casualty routes, improve response times to calls for service, and up skill our own staff, who can then provide professional and respected advice to the motorcycle community.

Essex Police supported the 2022 Christmas Drink and Drug drive campaign, with an extended campaign to include the FIFA World Cup period. The campaign resulted in 163 arrests for drink driving, 158 arrests for drug driving and a further 49 for failing to provide.

### **Operations Centre**

Over the last 6 months the Operations Centre (Ops Planning and the Resource Management Unit) has supported 235 operations, including M25 protests, HRH Queen Elizabeth's funeral, Clacton Airshow, Waltham Abbey music festival and demand driven Southend seafront deployments.

There are 32 planned operations for 2023 already including King's coronation, a Royal visit to Colchester, Creamfields music festival and Clacton Airshow.

Our events assessment process has been reviewed and amended to ensure better identification of risk and consistency in our response to and policing of events. In addition, the Operations Centre has taken on the learning from multiple operation Hazels in developing our preparedness for any environmental protest in 2023. This includes development of a detailed force logistics and resourcing plan for policing operations. We have also developed the working at heights team, which is now operational with investment into the training, equipment and CPD of the team so that we can deploy more quickly to resolve criminal protest activity in the county.

The Operations Centre has developed processes to identify areas of high demand over the course of the year for the force and how these intersect with police operations. This identifies times of the year where resourcing is constrained and informs strategic and tactical decision about the use of police resources.



## **Resilience Department**

Work has been focused on the National Power Outage (NPO) since September 2022, tasked both internally and externally. Internally the NPO plan is in place and being rolled out. Externally, Essex Police took part in a national NPO exercise on October 2022, this was a dress rehearsal for a larger three day exercise taking place in March 2023.

The department was also tasked to lead on a large-scale multi-agency exercise to validate the new Southend Airport emergency plan. The exercise was held on 26<sup>th</sup> January 23, the debrief report is currently being prepared. The initial learning is very positive and will be fully debriefed over the coming months with internal and external partners from the AAIB & CAA.

## **Stansted**

Performance metrics for 2022 should be viewed against the massive increase in passenger numbers following the lifting of travel restrictions. Passenger numbers in 2022 increased by 225% compared with 2021, up to 23,246,752 from 7,141,531. Reported crime increased accordingly, by 82% (282 more offences). Wider context shows that reported crime at Stansted Airport in 2022 was 35% lower than in 2019 demonstrating effective work with Manchester Airport Group and other stakeholders to prevent crime.

We continue to prioritise reduction of violence against women and girls by working on operations in collaboration with partner agencies to identify those who are vulnerable to offences of trafficking/ human slavery and female genital mutilation. We are improving support for victims of crime by ensuring that the victim care code is applied and managed effectively. We are breaking the cycle of abuse by attending reports expeditiously and ensuring the correct referrals are completed, including notifications to other force areas due to the transient nature of the airport community.

We are improving safety on our roads by patrolling the strategic networks and utilising vehicle check points to identify offences and locate offenders.

We are preventing business crime by implementing a patrol strategy to now include an unarmed CPT team working within the terminal daily. This team will work to improve crime prevention and develop relationships with retailers and licensed premises. We have linked with the business crime team to develop closer links to crime prevention teams and build MOUs to ensure the gaining of best evidence when a crime is committed, through CCTV collection and stronger evidence gathering through statement taking and witness interaction.

## **FSU**

The FSU continues to provide the service level agreement as dictated by the Armed Policing Strategic Risk Assessment (APSTRA). A review of our armed policing STRA has led to a planned reduction of ARV vehicles supplied by the FSU with further support being provided by an armed pair from Stansted Airport. The force is confident that this will give sufficient capability to protect the public and police personnel against firearms and weapons threats across the county.

When not deployed tackling the 474-armed deployments so far this financial year, the FSU are tasked with undertaking the arrest of individuals wanted for High Harm of High-Risk offences, supporting LPAs with fast road and enhanced medic support and Specialist Method of Entry (MOE) tactics for entry to premises during an emergency. Furthermore, all Officers undertake a patrol strategy which maximises their coverage across the Force, including supporting Op Grip.

The Firearms Training team and FSU continue to drive recruitment and attraction to a firearms career through the OPC D&I board and national working groups. The goal is to improve the level of under representation within armed policing, with a particular emphasis on recruitment of female AFO's. Within the last 12 months, Essex Police have continued to increase female representation within the department at both the operational and command levels. This has been achieved through a combination of increasing awareness of the role to underrepresented groups coupled with the introduction of a 'Buddy scheme' which pairs potential students with experienced AFO's.

### **6.0 Implications (Issues)**

As with the previous section, the implications and issues arising from the last 6 months are presented by team/dept.

#### **Serious Violence Unit**

The challenge in this space remains resourcing the PPP team to meet our ambitions. This is a small, dedicated team that is working with partners to intervene with victims and offenders to reduce further serious violence. The Knife Crime Violence Model (KCVM) has shown real promise in reducing the frequency and severity of violence, but it requires investment to ensure that there are sufficient practitioners to make the necessary interventions. A partnership approach is required to ensure that the KCVM is properly resourced and can keep pace with the intended expansion across other districts.

Despite intervention on 175 drug lines in the last year, the continued prevalence of county lines means the challenge of tackling these and the associated crime continues to be an issue. Drugs lines have developed their business model in response to successful investigative tactics, adapting to social media platforms and more sophisticated methods of communication. Teams have and will continue to adapt to the changing landscape and increasing demand whilst continuing to be proactive, prioritising those high harm lines which have the biggest impact on the most vulnerable and communities.

## **Operational Support Group (OSG)**

The largest potential implication for the team this coming year is from competing priorities in supporting Contact Management, resourcing the Southend Sea front operation, meeting commitments from other planned operations and events (including the Kings Coronation and various music festivals), maintaining performance around arresting high harm nominals and responding to any protest activity. Last year we had 4 significant periods of protests which took OSG away from their agreed taskings supporting the force. It is unclear how the force will be affected by protest in the coming months, but our petrochemical footprint along the Thames corridor and proximity to London makes us vulnerable. These challenges will be mitigated through effective advance planning, early stakeholder engagement and clear prioritisation at times of conflicting need.

## **Marine Section**

The RHIB and launch are currently out of the water due to repairs and maintenance. The unit is reliant on Maldon Council's PWCs (jet ski's) and shore-based patrols. The RHIB should be back in the water in February. The future of the launch is subject of a business case submission to the Strategic Board on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023. The implications of not being able to get funding for a cabin RHIB (replacement of the launch) would be that we would be unable to protect our coastlines or maintain our current visibility on the water.

## **Drone Team**

In October 2023 the drones held by Essex Police are due for renewal. There is currently funding in place for this following the funding secured in 2021 for a three-year period.

There are only 2 constables on the drone team. Resourcing is to be considered in the next financial year for a staff uplift to increase the team and its capabilities. The establishment of the drone team is under review and one option is to realign a post from OSG to the drone team. This will provide a better response and service to the LPA's and public and prevent further abstractions from OSG allowing them to concentrate on the spontaneous deployments and high harm across the Force.

## **Search Team**

A significant operation relating to a murder in Harlow and the last four weeks have left some officers involved in searching the lake feeling exhausted and fatigued with the hours worked and physical labour involved in the tasks. This also resulted in a large number of officers working overtime as they could not be abstracted from business-as-usual policing due to minimum staffing levels. Being able to recruit officers interested in the skill and obtain the relevant course from the Police National Search Centre is critical to reach desired levels and to reduce some of the stress and pressure on both the Police Search Advisors (PoSAs) and our Resource Management Unit. The team are working hard to attract interest from across the force, to build resilience in this critical skill area.

The role of a Police Search Advisor (PoISA) also remains difficult to fill. This is a national challenge. Two officers are currently under consideration for upskilling in this specialism.

## **CBRN**

There is one dedicated PC allocated to the CBRN department who is the main co-ordinator. First responders – Duty Liaison Officers (DLOs) - are taken from those trained around the County and there is no dedicated team. The enhanced responders are trained with the Operational Support Group and ARVOs are now trained.

It is identified that as DLO's are experienced officers many are looking to further their careers and seek promotion or new roles across the Force which has seen a reduction in numbers available for the on-call function. Plans are being made for another DLO course in the future which is held and trained in Force.

In December 2022 a mobilisation exercise took place by the NCBRNC. We are still awaiting full results compared to other forces across the region, the initial feedback appears positive with some learning opportunities. Further implementations will be made following the full report.

## **Dog Section**

The dog section is made up of two patrol Sergeants and one training Sergeant. One of the patrol Sergeants has successfully applied for another role. This gap will be covered by an acting/temporary Sergeant.

The current Firearms Support Dog capacity is heavily reduced from 10 down to 2 through the retirement of dogs and the transition of staff to other departments. It will be some time before these attributes may be replenished due to an inexperienced work force and young dogs. The lone Tag and Drag dog we had has now been lost through promotion of the handler to the next rank. These skills will be re-trained and re-introduced over the coming months as courses are scheduled.

## **Roads Policing**

Drug driving remains a threat on Essex roads. We have sufficient drug wipes to service business as usual and continue to train additional staff in their use. Any significant increase in proactivity around drug driving is likely to attract unsustainable costs for forensic analysis of blood samples. During the covid pandemic monthly arrests were three times higher than current levels; this attracted a forensic analysis cost of more than £1 million. NPCC recognise the potential cost implications upon Policing and are working with the Road Traffic Toxicology industry on finding a cost-effective solution. Until such a solution is identified, or significant funding is obtained, we are unlikely to reach our full potential in tackling drug driving.

## **Resource Management Unit (RMU)**

The ability to meet demand for business as usual as well as unexpected or planned large scale operations or support calls depends upon the good will and motivation of the team, together with judicious use of overtime. Despite this, the RMU is regularly identified as a limiting factor in our response to major incidents (e.g. Operation Hazel) and in supporting day-to-day critical business functions (e.g. maintaining minimum staffing levels on LPT). The size of the team, working practices and limitations of SAP mean the RMU is vulnerable to any shifts in demand. The command has commissioned a review by the Strategic Change Team to identify best practice and opportunities to improve the service offered. This review will be conducted in the coming months.

Training planning is currently being supported by an officer on restrictions in place of a long-term sick staff member. This is a temporary solution but envisaged to continue for some months.

## **Resilience Department**

The last year has seen a significant increase in demand on the team following the pandemic period. This initially manifested in an increased volume of testing and exercises and is now materialising in updating overdue emergency plans (which were delayed because of these exercises). The department have initially pulled back from a number of multi-agency exercises in 2023, however, as of 1<sup>st</sup> April a new Testing & Exercising Officer will increase capacity. The department has still been able to deliver the command training for the Force Duty Officer course, support Operation Hazel and assist in developing a ground response plan at Southend Airport.

## **Stansted**

The current PSA agreement budget is £6,169,573 agreed in April 2022 between Manchester Airport Group (MAG) and Essex Police, this can be reviewed yearly. This allowed for an increase of 5 officers into the Airport's Community Policing Team. The airport is now reporting 97% of passengers travelling compared to pre-pandemic numbers, so it is likely that we will approach MAG to discuss reinstating some of the assets that were lost during the pandemic.

Deportation flights continue to increase with the potential of controversial flights to Rwanda being discussed at Government level. Should Stansted Airport be utilised for these flights it is likely to require an enhanced level of policing as protest and attempts to disrupt the flights can be reasonably anticipated.

In the last 6 months Stansted Airport have conducted 76 VVIP movements through the airport, supporting RaSP in the protection of senior Government officials and visiting dignitaries. The upcoming King's Coronation is likely to see a large number of VVIP arrivals, similar in number to those seen during HRH Queen Elizabeth's funeral. The force is well advanced in its planning and resourcing of this operation.

## **FSU**

The FSU is currently operating with 11 vacancies (11% vacancy factor) and is encumbered by an increasing training requirement, now 120hrs per year for all ARVOs. These factors have made resourcing to the daily STRA levels challenging. To maintain the operational requirement the force has reconfigured the training programme and firearms pathway, improved governance of overtime budgets and reviewed the strategic threat and risk assessment to ensure that our provision meets the current threat.

The demand for firearms officers shows no signs of reduction; Essex FSU and weapons training continue to be the busiest per capita in the Eastern Region. To ensure we have a healthy pathway into the FSU from the Airport, Firearms Training will be running two AFO to ARV upskill courses and an initial firearms course throughout 2023. This will support the reduction of overtime spend and improve resilience across firearms.

## **FSEL**

The department was unfortunate in that two Firearms Enquiry Officers (FEOs) left the team in 2022. The process to replace them has taken almost ten months. Two candidates were successful at interview, however, both failed vetting. The existing FEOs were incredibly flexible covering the vacant geographically areas, however FSEL did rely on issuing Temporary Permits, where a home visit could not be completed before the existing certificate expired. In total, 35 temporary licences are in place (out of a total of 23,500 firearms licences). The Statutory Guidelines for Chief Officers issued by the Home Office in November 2021 is currently under review with a revised version due in April 2023. As part of this work there will be a new requirement to only use temporary permits in exceptional circumstances. Efforts to recruit to the vacant roles within FSEL continue.

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

Provide details of how this work makes a positive impact on/contributes to the priorities set out in the Police and Crime Plan.

OPC plays a key role in delivering against priorities in the Police and Crime Plan, examples include:

#### **Investment in crime prevention**

- OPC is a significant contributor to violence hotspot patrols
- SVU's PPP Team deliver the KCVM and have strong links to the Violence & Vulnerability Unit to support delivery of localities-based programmes.
  - OPC tasking processes ensure resources are targeted against crime hotspots and offenders, including targeting those causing the most harm to communities.
  - Roads policing work with highways authorities to consider new road developments and designing out risk.
  - A number of OPC functions either directly provide or support educational inputs to adults and young people.

- Operational Planning ensure that crime prevention is fully considered within the SAG and event planning process.

#### **Reducing drug-driven violence**

- Core business for Teams targeting OCGs and drug supply
- PPP Safeguarding officers support those being groomed and exploited by gangs and county lines.
- Prioritisation of OPC resources against high harm offenders
- OSG and FSU support to SCD and LPA-led search warrants

#### **Reducing violence against women and girls**

- OPC is exploring how we can provide support to Project Minerva
- Focus on NTE targeted violence patrol zones
- Operations at Stansted Airport to prevent violence and exploitation

#### **Protecting rural and isolated areas**

- Marine Section are a visible and engaged presence within marine communities, often also rural and isolated areas

#### **Improving safety on our roads**

- Roads Policing Teams lead on prevention and enforcement around road safety.
- Partnership work within SERP
- OPC led on the World Cup and Christmas drink drive campaign

## **6.2 Demand**

### **Serious Violence Unit**

The on-line strategy that is being developed will generate an increase in demand for the team. The proactive work to identify those that engaging in drug supply and exploiting the vulnerable will no doubt identify offending that we were not previously aware of. To what extent is unknown at this time, but as the strategy develops, we will have a greater understanding.

The work conducted through the KCVM will continue to increase in demand as it is rolled out to busier districts. This will limit the number of offenders that the PPP team can engage with and therefore limit the volume of interventions. Work with partner agencies to generate increased commitment is underway to support this.

### **Operational Support Group (OSG)**

Due to the impressive performance of the team and the new tasking process which is more accessible to teams across the force who are now fully aware of the capabilities of OSG and the wider OPC assets, it is expected that requests of OSG will continue to increase from LPA's and other departments across the force.

The team have previously supported demand based taskings in Southend the last two summers and it is expected that they will be assisting in summer 2023. Competing priorities around support to the Force Control Room, Operation High

harm and planned operations and events may compromise the team's capacity and production.

### **Marine Section**

The only concern with Marine Section being able to meet their operational demands this year is dependent on authority to purchase a replacement boat. Without the additional boat this would impact on the capability of the team being able to respond to water related incidents, particularly those more protracted deployments or further from the shoreline.

### **Drone Team**

The drone team have seen the number of flights deployments increase over the last year. The team are appropriately staffed and with some drone flights being completed by OSG it does give the team some resilience. The Rural Engagement Team are seeking finance for a drone and the training of 3 pilots. This will provide an additional function for the rural community of Essex and assist with reducing the impact of drone deployment requests for the drone team.

### **Search Team**

We have applied to the National Search Centre for courses next year of 2 x PoISA, 3 x PoISA Relicensing, and 2 x LSO courses to train 48 new LSO's. This will increase numbers to reach the STRA. We are waiting for confirmation from the Centre which is expected in February 2023.

### **Dog Section**

The Section have attended 3335 incidents over the 6-month review period which shows a slight reduction on the 3766 this time last year. We have also seen slight reductions in arrests, intelligence reports and stop & search. This is likely due to the increased impact of various events – Commonwealth Games, Climate Conference, HRH Queen Elizabeth's funeral and JSO protests absorbing the limited resources we have and the knock-on effect of having to catch up on training for the dog teams to remain in licence. The section does not anticipate any reduction in demand on their skills over the coming year.

The team have a Dangerous Dogs Manager who supports the section and wider force with the increasing risk and demand in this important area of work. There were 808 dangerous dog incidents reported in 2020, 1388 in 2021, and 1431 in 2022. In 2021 there were 83 dogs seized which is similar to the previous year. This year there have been 181, 95 of which were from dog attacks resulting in injuries. It's assumed that the reason for this disproportionate number of seizures to offences is due to a combination of increased dog ownership through the pandemic, the education shared to the wider force by our Dog Liaison Officer and better knowledge and practices being employed. As a result, our dangerous dog kennels are at critical levels with no capability to seize further dogs due to the number that have been seized and the length of time the investigations are taking to get to court. The team continue to work with investigating officers to ensure investigations are progressed



efficiently to ensure the dog is housed for the least amount of time. The kennel service contract provider has been approached for additional capacity but is unable to source further spaces as many forces are experiencing this challenge. The team are working with both corporate finance to manage the increasing costs and the Courts to try and recover imposed costs.

### **Roads Policing**

There are a number of future infrastructure projects that will place additional demand upon Roads Policing, both in terms of responding to call for service and expected increase in demand. These include the upgrade of the A12 (January 2024) and Lower Thames Crossing project (2025). These will be further explored in the OPC's annual report in September. Post-pandemic road use is similar to pre-pandemic levels and there are no factors that predict a significant increase in demand over the coming year.

### **Ops Planning**

The planning is taking place for a number of significant policing operations in terms of a royal visit and the King's coronation over the course of the next 6 months. The threat around JSO and environmental protest is still real which has previously seen significant disruption to Essex and commitment of policing resources.

### **Resource Management Unit (RMU)**

To prevent accruing of hours owed as a result of bank holiday working, RMU will start to reassign hours owed to officer's duties. This creates an additional demand of approximately 100,000 SAP transactions a year. An additional administrator post has been agreed to provide capacity.

### **Resilience Department**

Demand for testing and exercising and for reviewing and refreshing emergency plans has been steadily rising and currently exceeds capacity. The new training, testing & exercising officer has been recruited and will take up post in April 2023. ERF and national work have increased, mainly focused on the new National Security Risk Assessment (NSRA), national power outage (NPO) planning and the new Resilience Framework.

### **Stansted**

Following a review of the force ARV establishment, Stansted Airport will now provide an armed capability to deploy as a contingency in support of the county ARVs. The preferred option is for a contingency ARV, however, driving authorities are a limiting factor (ARV drivers must be trained to advanced level). Driver Training have now provided additional courses and Stansted officers are being prioritised for courses.

Manchester Airport Group have now sold a significant part of the Northside of the airport to a private company. Essex Police are currently reviewing the impact this will have on policing and linking with the new company.

The new Airport Commander has written a 10-point plan to set the policing style and tone for the next 2-year period, this will include a focus on Community Policing and set out arguments for growth of the policing establishment in line with airport growth.

## **FSU**

The Armed Policing STRA does not predict a significant increase in demand for armed policing resources across the coming year. The number of ARVs will be reduced, in line with the latest threat and risk assessment, with supporting armed capacity from Stansted Airport where required.

## **Firearms Training**

Firearms training continue to face significant challenges with access to aging and unsuitable facilities to deliver mandated College of Policing training. The unit is making increasing use of out-of-force facilities due to a lack of provision or availability in county. This is increasing duty times and associated costs, including from trainers attending the venues in advance of the training day (a requirement of COP). The training team continue to work hard to identify suitable local venues for training, but must still travel out of force for the 50m qualification shoots.

## **Taser Governance**

The new College of Policing CED licencing process came into effect on 1st April 2022 and includes the requirement for the designation of Chief Taser Instructor(s) (CTI) and Deputy Chief Taser Instructor(s) (DCTI). CED is now a CoP licensable activity and forces will be expected to have systems and structures in place, in addition to a Police Service Quality Management System (PSQMS) submission, ahead of a CED inspection by CoP for accreditation. Work is being undertaken by the Armed Policing and the 7-force collaboration to meet the requirements for a Taser training licence.

## **FSEL**

There are three significant events in 2023 that will impact FSEL. In January 2023 the coroner's inquest into the 2021 shootings in Keysham, Plymouth begins. Further amendments are expected within the reviewed statutory guidelines (subject to ministerial approval) this will include a requirement to conduct open source and social media checks across a wide range of platforms with greater emphasis being placed on Chief Officers to weigh-up risks in this area. The current guidance for Chief Officers only *suggests* that social media checks be conducted where intelligence suggest that further information could be obtained. If adopted, this requirement will place additional demand on staff within FSEL.

As previously reported at COG in July 2022, as part of the Home Office review into firearms licensing fees, data gathering activity over the summer period was conducted to provide an evidence base around the issuing and management of a firearm or shotgun certificate and the costs involved. Unfortunately, it became apparent that this method was unreliable and inconsistent, a decision was made to disregard it. FELWG has since developed a more simplified data requirement. Essex

FSEL will be involved in the new data gathering methodology starting on the 9th Jan and will run for 2 weeks.

### **6.3 Risks/Mitigation**

There are no strategic risks recorded on the force risk register. There are currently 11 risks recorded on the force management level risk registers which are monitored and overseen by an Assistant Chief Constable.

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

No identified equality or human rights implications arising from this paper.

### **6.5 Health and Safety Implications**

Health and safety has been the driving force behind the decision to take the Marine Launch offline before its re-licensing in October 2023. The loss of the fire detection and fire suppression systems present an unacceptable risk to our officers.

### **7.0 Consultation/Engagement**

This paper has been compiled from contributions from each of the Chief Inspectors, staff equivalents and Superintendents in OPC. Wider consultation has not been necessary to provide this update.

### **8.0 Actions for Improvement**

Operational Policing Command has a clear ambition and plans to improve the contribution to the Force Plan. The information at section 5 describes the new work and activity that is in place across the command to improve performance and outcomes.

The command is not currently subject to any HMICFRS Areas for Improvement.

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

Section 5 of this report presents the current work and performance of OPC and some of the developing plans for the future.

The command has an almost entirely new senior leadership team. Over the coming year the ambition for OPC is to ensure we are a command:

- That provides well-trained, well-equipped expert and specialist capabilities that make a clear and indispensable contribution to the force plan
- That thinks ahead and puts the force in the best place to meet current and future operational threats
- Where people are professional, proud to serve and where they feel valued and respected.
- That's attractive and accessible to all, that influences and inspires those we work with and that is recognised nationally as a centre of innovation, excellence and best practice

The most immediate priority areas of work to deliver this ambition are:

1. Revised tactical tasking and coordination processes – this will see OPC Chief Inspectors attending LPA tasking meetings, better aligning specialist skills to local crime and offender problems and ensuring our assets are deployed to best effect across the force.
2. Prepared for Protest – a 4P plan to put the force in the best possible position to deal with further incidents of environmental protest, including engagement with stakeholders; training for officers and staff; resilience within command structures; learning from other force areas; resourcing and logistics plans.
3. Annual planner – providing the force with a single view forward plan for the year, identifying periods of peak and/or competing demand and foreseeable resource challenges.
4. Commander CPD and re-accreditation – a refreshed and improved programme of continuous professional development for public order, JESIP and firearms commanders, alongside a new qualitative assessment of firearms commanders.
5. Work with JESIP partners to ensure effective implementation of outcomes from the Manchester Arena Inquiry.
6. Social media scraping – work through BT Hothouse to utilise development in AI and machine learning to identify, sift and present footage from social media that includes evidence of drug line and exploitation activity in Essex.