



## **The South Wales joint approach to refreshing Community Safety, Neighbourhood Policing and the role of PCSOs**

During November the Police & Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable have written to the Leader and Chief Executive of each of our seven Local Authorities to provide a joint reflection on the challenges that are faced by the Police and by each Council in the coming year with suggestions about how we can help each other. This report explains their considered view of our immediate priorities and the issues we need to address jointly with our Local Government partners. The letter is being followed up in our quarterly meeting with each Council leadership, five of which have taken place in November and the series will be completed next week. The response has been very positive indeed.

We acknowledged that as we prepare for the year ahead, after two years dominated by COVID-19, what stands out is the excellent partnership work that we have experienced with Local Government as well as with Welsh Government. Even though everyone is under pressure there is a leadership consensus in Wales and we want to build on the success of Joint Enforcement Teams (Jets) by strengthening joint work on Prevention and other issues in which we have common interest.

### **We are therefore seeking to explore with each partner how best to make that a local reality.**

The safety and security of the public is the first priority of government at every level, so no joint working is more significant than in Community Safety, where the local police and the local authority are required by law to lead partnership working, involving other agencies and the local community. So we have focussed specifically on this part of police responsibilities.

As Chief Constable and Commissioner, we share a personal belief that the Community Safety model is vital for success – but long before the Pandemic the work of community safety had been disrupted across England and Wales by the impact of austerity. It led to significant loss of people, resources and analytic capacity in both the police and councils, undermining what was once a great success story. Covid-related demand and changes in normal working and behaviour has made Community Safety ever more challenging to deliver – but more necessary than ever.

The fundamental principles of Community Safety, set out in the 1998 Crime & Disorder Act, are for the Council and Police to jointly analyse harm and demand, agree action to tackle the identified local issues of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour, and to continually assess progress. It is probably fair to say that, despite earlier successes, no Community Safety Partnership has been able to be fully effective since Austerity led to that loss of resources.

Several factors make this the right time to start again so that together we make a reality of “Safe, Confident, Resilient, Communities” within the Future Generations Act framework.

### **We therefore suggested that it is timely to link the following requirements.**

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- We all have to contribute to the Well-Being Assessments and priority setting required under the Future Generations Act.
- Policing in Wales and Local Government (WLGA) are leading fresh thinking via the Safer Communities Network, supported by Welsh Government.
- We have to establish norms for the future – whatever the “new normal” turns out to look like post Covid - following a Budget that doesn’t offer enough new money to match need as we plan for a new financial year.

With those points in mind, we have taken stock within policing in South Wales, looking at how to “do more with less” and be even more effective for our public. In doing so we have looked at what we can offer **you** as our key partner locally in the belief that **together we can achieve more than we can achieve alone.**

## **Progress so far.....**

As a contribution to our discussion, we have already taken positive steps.

- In South Wales we will invest new resources into Community Safety as well as maintaining the financial support from the Commissioner’s budget that we have maintained since 2012 despite cuts by others.
- With the WLGA we have made a significant financial contribution to developing a renewed Community Safety strategy across Wales.
- We are heartened by the sense of community that has characterised much of the response to COVID-19 in Wales and how police and council officers have worked together – we plan to build on that.
- Additional PCSOs funded by Welsh Government and additional police officers funded by the Home Office give us the chance to invest in local policing despite increased demand and wider challenges of organised crime, people trafficking, county lines and online fraud.
- **But** the Pandemic has left communities fragile and worried, with pleas from the public to police and councils alike for action on antisocial behaviour, on the safety and confidence of women and girls, on all aspects of hate crime and on domestic violence and abuse.

Meeting those aspirations is not going to be easy and it cannot be done by the Police alone – nor indeed by the Council alone - so we have challenged ourselves to put fresh energy and additional resources into local work and want to use this autumn’s round of meetings to set out our “offer”, hoping for a positive response and local commitment so that we can build on our existing partnership work with you.

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It's not easy when the current level of demand on the police is so high (please see Annex A) and when each Council too is facing significant demands, but we became convinced that the time is right to set out the following proposals as our contribution to joint working.

## Our commitment of staff and resources

Our three-fold operational commitment has a focus on.....

- **Neighbourhood Policing** – It's a priority for the Chief Constable and at the heart of the Commissioner's Police & Crime Plan. Neighbourhood policing resources are being realigned under each Partnerships Superintendent with a clear focus on problem solving. There's a commitment to less abstraction of officers and PCSOs (inevitable during the Pandemic but criticised by councillors) and we're making a particular effort to reconnect Councillors and PCSOs in ways that reflect best practice in many areas.
- **A strengthened role for our PCSOs** – with a focus on communication (to the community and listening to the community) on local problem-solving and on empowerment (enabling local people to solve local issues). The Chief Constable is deploying the 41 additional PCSOs we are recruiting through the Welsh Government initiative into priority work such as youth engagement, community cohesion, substance misuse, harm reduction, anti-social behaviour and town-centre issues to help find local solutions to local problems.
- **Community Safety** – with new senior staff roles each BCU to work with each Council's community safety staff, to provide the long-term continuity that we have lacked in recent years in addition to the committed local police leadership. One appointment is being made to each BCU immediately with four more appointments to follow in due course to give a dedicated police lead for each council area, specifically linked to the Neighbourhood Team and to the Council's community safety staff.

These "problem-solving and prevention managers" will provide the essential continuity to match that of the Council as we work with together to analyse local issues and - together – to make community safety an evidence-based (rather than opinion-based) endeavour.

- To help drive partnership working, Dan Jones has been appointed as Head of Community Safety in the Commissioner's Team and will be supported by Gemma Woolfe and Rachel Loveridge. Dan will continue to be Deputy Director of the Violence Prevention Unit for Wales, bringing his experience there into our local community safety work, offering support for problem solving groups and Community Safety meetings with a link to the Commissioner's Strategic Policy Leads, for example on Domestic Violence & Abuse and Criminal Justice, particularly Youth Justice.
- Mark Brace will provide strategic leadership for our engagement as members of the Public Services Board, and we believe it is essential for Community Safety work to feed into the PSB as is happening increasingly at the local level. It is encouraging that the Future Generations Commissioner acknowledges the importance of progress towards "Safe, Confident, Resilient Communities" within the Well Being Assessment.

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The above will support the strengthened Neighbourhood Policing Teams by focussing strongly on the facts locally and on early intervention and prevention, while enhancing our community problem solving capability and working closely with the council's Community Safety Team.

## Our financial commitment to local action

The existing level of financial contributions to community safety from the Commissioner's budget will continue but use of that money hasn't always been clear or well targeted. The same is true of our considerable contribution to each Youth Offending Team, in terms of money and police officer secondments. Dan Jones will discuss this with relevant managers with a view of ensuring that there is value for money and clarity between us in future.

The Commissioner's investment in Dyfodol provides a joined-up approach to substance misuse (drugs and alcohol) and we are exploring the prospects for an "Alliance" approach with local NHS services to make us all more effective on issues that threaten every local area. We need to tackle local attitudes to substance misuse and we are discussing with Public Health Wales the potential for changing public attitudes and behaviour.

We have also invested heavily in tackling the scourge of domestic violence and abuse, with the DRIVE programme now tackling head on some of the most serious perpetrators as well as the work we undertake to support victims and survivors, as previously reported to the Panel. It is worth noting that at present this work is funded from police funds alone although the problem that we are tackling is a priority for everyone.

We expect IRIS referrals (via GP surgeries) to grow in number once more as the Pandemic recedes and we need to make it easier for victims to seek help in each part of South Wales.

## Joint Problem-Solving Teams?

If we are to seize the moment to build on the success of the Joint Enforcement Teams (JETs) during the Pandemic, we need to decide on the brief and the local arrangements for what might be called "joint problem-solving teams". The format of those teams – and whether they are co-located or "virtual" – is a matter for local discussion with each Council.

Multi-agency membership is needed, with joint planning based on local data and need, and contributions from partners including Health, Fire Service and Voluntary Sector. That might involve staff from such disciplines as licensing, environmental health, trading standards and youth work, matched with our staff to undertake joint activity. These could include engagement, education initiatives and prevention campaigns as well as joint operations and joint patrols. **We are NOT suggesting new burdens but joint action to tackle issues that create demand for both the Police and the Council.** The starting point will be joint practices that have been successful during the Pandemic, but we are approaching this with open minds to capture the opportunity that has presented itself as we return to a "new normality".

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This report provides a brief summary of our starting point for discussion and as it appears that Councils are keen to explore what we might achieve jointly with each Council and we will work with each to develop a memorandum of understanding, to analyse the data and to agree joint objectives, and to agree joint operating procedures and logistical arrangements to put in place the most effective partnership working arrangements possible.

As the work develops with each Council, we will seek to engage councillors and staff as well as the public we all serve. That is why we set out this framework for discussion and we are now very optimistic that the discussion will lead to joint action. As mentioned, we are seeing positive engagement by each of our seven local authorities and as these developments progress we will keep the Police & Crime Panel informed.

Attached :

**Annex A : Demand on Policing in South Wales**

**Annex B : Demand on Policing in South Wales**

**Annex C : Public Health Approach to harm, crime and nuisance**