

ORIGINATOR: CHIEF CONSTABLE

PAPER NO: AP17/48

**SUBMITTED TO: ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL -
1 SEPTEMBER 2017**

SUBJECT: RURAL POLICING ANNUAL REPORT

SUMMARY:

1. The aim of this report is to provide an overview of the work carried out during 2016/17 which relates to the policing of rural communities within Suffolk.
2. The report also provides an update on the progress for the delivery of the rural policing strategy and the relevant aspects of the Police and Crime Plan

RECOMMENDATION:

1. The Accountability and Performance Panel is asked to note the work undertaken by the Constabulary, as detailed in this annual report

1. RURAL POLICING

- 1.1 In March this year the Constabulary launched the Rural Policing Strategy which identifies some of the key challenges faced by rural communities, and what measures the police will take to ensure we reduce crime and make our communities feel safe.
- 1.2 Launched with the support of the Countryside Alliance and the National Farmers Union, the strategy also highlights the Constabulary's commitment to rural policing through the allocation of resources and training.
- 1.3 Following the local policing review in 2016, the Safer Neighbourhood Teams were re-structured and given a more focussed approach to tackling some of the significant areas of demand for policing services. Each team member has taken on a lead role to focus on areas such as anti-social behaviour, mental health and rural crime.
- 1.4 There are 19 members of staff who have received additional training relating to rural policing, who include the lead officers spread across our safer neighbourhood teams, whose role is to ensure that the concerns of the rural communities in their areas are being addressed. In addition to those lead officers, staff who have roles in designing out crime and also within the crime management hub have also received the training.
- 1.5 From those 19 members of staff, 7 have received further training in tackling wildlife crime, including an Inspector who works within the control room, and who has operational oversight of rural crime for the county.
- 1.6 The Special Constabulary has also had a significant role in policing our rural communities, and whose voluntary hours have seen extra patrols and engagement across the county. A selected group of special constables will now form a dedicated team for rural policing, working with their full time colleagues as from September this year.
- 1.7 The Constabulary has now completed a selection process for an additional Constable and Sergeant post, making a total of 3 officers who will form part of a dedicated team for rural policing and who will be in place on the 4 September 2017.

2. RURAL CRIME

- 2.1 Although there is no nationally recognised definition for 'rural crime', Suffolk Constabulary, along with other forces across the country and Crimestoppers, has adopted a definition which ensures that we capture all aspects of crime, that impact on rural communities; "Any crime that affects those living, working or visiting rural areas of the UK".
- 2.2 Having a clear definition for rural crime will not only ensure that crime reports are appropriately recorded as rural, but also allow for the Constabulary to more accurately assess performance in this area and compare ourselves against other forces who have adopted the same definition.
- 2.3 When considering the nature of rural crime there are offences which are commonly encountered such as theft of machinery, fly tipping, hare coursing and criminal damage. However, when responding to and investigating such crimes, it is important to also consider factors such as the environment and the impact within a rural setting. Because of the nature of certain crime types, such as wildlife crime and theft of farm machinery, this can often lead to rural communities effectively becoming the targets for such crime, often increasing the feeling of vulnerability. In addition, it is important to recognise, the impact the crime has on rural businesses and

communities, which can be exacerbated by such things as the feeling of isolation and the high costs for replacing, or repairing, specialised equipment.

- 2.4 Although the crime statistics for Suffolk show an overall drop in rural crime over the last year, there has been an increase in reported incidents of hare coursing with 141 calls from the public in 2015/16 compared with 250 calls from the public in 2016/17. This mirrors an increase in neighbouring forces, and will feature as a high priority area for the Rural Crime Team over the coming months.
- 2.5 In looking to provide a picture of rural crime across the county or how Suffolk compares within our region, there are some considerations when analysing the data. Nationally, there are variances to how rural crime is recorded, with forces adopting differing definitions of what constitutes rural crime. This clearly presents difficulties when looking to compare data and measuring performance over a period of time, or against most similar forces. In addition, although there is ongoing work within the Athena programme to allow for the 'flagging' of crime categories such as rural crime, currently there is no specific identifier which can be used when recording such offences and searching is conducted using key words.

3. DELIVERING ON THE RURAL POLICING STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Rural Policing Strategy contains four key areas of activity under the headings of Prevention, Enforcement, Intelligence and Reassurance.
- 3.2 These four areas of focus, which are underpinned with a separate delivery plan, form the basis of the day to day activity of the staff, which is managed through a tasking and performance framework.
- 3.3 The delivery plan provides clear objectives for officers, which are reviewed by the Community Safety department which monitors progress and performance against the strategy, through a bi-monthly Delivery Board.
- 3.4 In addition to its own performance framework, successful delivery on the Strategy is also gauged on an increase in public confidence and satisfaction in the police. This encompasses wider elements of policing in rural areas, such as how well the Constabulary deals with victims of crime in cases of domestic abuse, and is ultimately reviewed at a strategic level through the Confidence and Satisfaction Board chaired by the Assistant Chief Constable
- 3.5 The points below provide a summary of the activity under the four key headings.

Prevention

- 3.6 A further training package for the rural policing leads and the additional members of the team was delivered with a one day event in June, and a further two days planned in September. The training has been prepared with the support of the National Farmers Union and delivered by a national lead in rural policing. Seven of the rural policing SPOC's have completed a Wildlife Officers course and receive regular Continuing Professional Development which is arranged in force, and two officers have attended a CITES course which relates to the illegal import and export of endangered species.
- 3.7 The Special Constabulary, who has continually supported the policing of rural communities, will join the rural policing team in September as a dedicated unit which will also encompass the resourcing of the Broads boat. This will add a further seven officers to the team, who will help support planned operations as well as providing patrols and engagement within the community.

- 3.8 Community Speed Watch increased again last year in terms of the numbers of volunteers, schemes, vehicles checked and the number of advisory letters which have been sent out. The scheme helps provide an excellent community based response to helping to reduce vehicle speeds, and therefore road traffic collisions in the more rural towns and villages within the county.
- 3.9 The Constabulary uses Police Connect as a messaging forum to help provide and request information, and to reassure to the public, with the messages coming through as either an email or text message. A key piece of feedback from rural communities is that they want to receive messages from the police on such forums as Police Connect and Twitter which are relevant to their community or business. The Community Safety department has now started a review of the use of Police Connect to ensure that it is being used as effectively as possible, and whether the Constabulary can also use other platforms such as Twitter to help provide those updates. The review will look to provide an initial report in October 2017.

Enforcement

- 3.10 Because offences such as hare coursing can often take place near to, or cross over county boundaries, the rural policing leads for Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire Constabularies made an initial agreement to share resources for rural policing operations for set days each year. This initiative will provide a significant policing resource and help disrupt and deter the organised crime groups who come into the region.
- 3.11 The Rural Policing officers within Suffolk and Norfolk Constabularies have historically worked together for the policing of hunts close to the border. This provided a pooled resource to effectively police the activities of hunt monitors. Rural policing leads for both counties are in the process of reviewing this working arrangement ahead of the upcoming hunt season.
- 3.12 The operational approach to policing hunts will be subject to review in September, and will look to revisit some work undertaken last season which focussed on dialogue and agreement between hunt organisers and monitors.

Intelligence

- 3.13 The use of ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) forms an important part of gathering intelligence, but also ensures that the Constabulary can provide effective enforcement and prevention when dealing with rural crime. The dedicated team for rural policing, which is a countywide resource, have full use of ANPR technology within their patrol vehicles, which can be utilised both passively and proactively.
- 3.14 In conjunction with the National Farmers Union, the Constabulary is creating a Rural Communities Advisory Group which will act as a critical friend for the police, and will also provide a forum for two way sharing of information and intelligence.
- 3.15 Representatives for all the Eastern Region forces attend regular meetings to discuss the policing of rural and wildlife crime. This acts as an ideal opportunity to share information, intelligence and best practice.

Reassurance

- 3.16 The report has already highlighted some of the activities which are in place to help provide reassurance to our rural communities that the police are listening, responding and addressing the issues that they raise:-

- Reviewing and increasing the use of Police Connect and other social media to provide information and updates to the public;
- Creation of a Rural Communities Advisory Group, so the public have a forum to meet with the police and raise concerns and ask questions;
- Providing a formal process to ensure the performance for the delivery of the Rural Policing Strategy is accountable and effectively managed.

3.17 It is important to ensure that as well as delivering on the strategy, that the public feel reassured and confident in the Constabulary's policing of rural areas not only through our support to victims of crime but also how effective the Constabulary is at preventing crime and prosecuting offenders, which is managed through the Constabulary's performance framework.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/RESOURCES

4.1 The newly created Sergeant and Constable posts come from within existing establishment and do not represent any additional cost for the Constabulary.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

5.1 There are no other implications and risks associated with this report.

ORIGINATOR CHECKLIST (MUST BE COMPLETED)	PLEASE STATE 'YES' OR 'NO'
Has legal advice been sought on this submission?	NO
Has the PCC's Chief Finance Officer been consulted?	NO
Have equality, diversity and human rights implications been considered including equality analysis, as appropriate?	YES
Have human resource implications been considered?	YES
Is the recommendation consistent with the objectives in the Police and Crime Plan?	YES
Has consultation been undertaken with people or agencies likely to be affected by the recommendation?	YES
Has communications advice been sought on areas of likely media interest and how they might be managed?	YES
Have all relevant ethical factors been taken into consideration in developing this submission?	YES