



ORIGINATOR: CHIEF CONSTABLE

PAPER NO: AP18/45

**SUBMITTED TO: ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL -
7 SEPTEMBER 2018**

SUBJECT: RURAL POLICING ANNUAL REPORT

SUMMARY:

1. The aim of this report is to provide an overview of the work carried out during 2017/18 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 2017 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 Country Landowners' Association 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, the rural crime SPOCS receiving additional training as well as quarterly invitations to the Rural Policing Team's continued professional development training.
- 1.4 The Force "2025 project" has necessitated the following changes: the Rural Inspector will move from the Contact and Control Room (CCR) to the Western area and will continue to manage the team; the rural Sergeant will continue to be based in the west, and will continue to supervise one rural officer while also taking on responsibility for a number of other supporting groups including Schools Liaison and Youth Offending Team; the second rural officer will be supervised by a Sergeant from the Eastern Area. The Rural Policing Strategy is being updated to reflect these changes.
- 1.5 There are 15 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 Incident and Crime Management Hub have also received the training.
- 1.6 From those 15 members of staff, six have received further training in tackling wildlife crime, including an Inspector who works within the CCR and who has operational oversight of rural crime for the county.
- 1.7 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 have now formed a dedicated team for rural policing (The Rural and Marine Team), working with their full time colleagues as from September 2017.
- 1.8 The Rural Policing Team has been in existence since September 2017 and has already made a significant impact in bringing partners together within the Rural Community. Regular "barn meetings" are held with local farmers and land owners. Venues are arranged via the National Farmers Union (NFU) and bring officers into contact with rural communities enabling first hand discussion of issues and the ability to bring problems directly to the Rural Policing Team. The Rural Policing Team was recently recognised for this engagement by winning an internal award for community engagement, the Sheepshanks Trophy, following a unanimous decision by the judging panel.
- 1.9 The Rural Policing Team is providing ongoing training to officers (joining them on attachments), probationers and CCR staff to raise their awareness of rural issues and offences. In addition, the team have produced pro forma guides and pro forma interview notes to allow officers, who are perhaps unfamiliar with rural offences, the

confidence to deal positively with offenders, (as well as being available on the radio/phone to provide guidance if they are unable to get to a particular event personally).

- 1.10 The Rural Policing Team have also taken responsibility for training staff about specific legislation surrounding attacks on guide dogs (and other assistance dogs) by other dogs.

2. RURAL CRIME

- 2.1 There is no nationally recognised definition for 'rural crime', which was discussed at a recent Rural Conference in July 2018, with a view to urgently seeking a common national definition. Suffolk Constabulary, along with some 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. The crime recording system, Athena, being a multi-force tool does not easily allow rural or wildlife offences to be "flagged".
- 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. The 2018 National Rural Crime Network "Living on the Edge" has shown a 30% increase in rural community's concern over crime, since the previous survey in 2015.
- 2.4 Although the crime statistics for Suffolk show an overall drop in rural crime from 2016 to 2017 (and a further projected fall into 2018), there has been an increase in reported incidents of hare coursing with 141 calls from the public in 2016/17 compared with just over 400 calls from the public in 2017/18. The early harvest in 2018 has meant that offences of hare coursing are already being reported on a daily basis. This mirrors an increase in neighbouring forces, and will feature as a high priority area for the Rural Crime Team over the coming months. There has also been a national rise in the violence offered to officers and landowners by hare coursers. Figures relating to a basket of crime types are shown at Appendix 1.
- 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.

2 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 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.
- 3.4 The points below provide a summary of the activity under the four key headings.

Prevention

- 3.5 All Rural officers have now attended a CITES course which relates to the illegal import and export of endangered species, in addition to the national wildlife crime course. Owing to a deficiency in wildlife trained officers in the Eastern Area funding was sought to train an officer, specifically within this area – this officer has now been trained. This brings those who have attended the national wildlife course to 10 (4 Rural Policing Team and 6 others).
- 3.6 The Rural Policing Team has taken on, in its entirety, the Police Volunteers on Horseback, providing training and guidance about what to look for/be aware of while riding out in our rural areas. This has been well received across the group.
- 3.7 The Special Constabulary, which has continually supported the policing of rural communities, joined the Rural Policing Team as a dedicated Rural and Marine (RAM) Unit which will also encompass the resourcing of the Broads boat. This will add a further three 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.
- 3.10 The Rural Policing Team has introduced a “FAST SMS” messaging service to provide immediate updates to those signed up to it, typically on the movement of known hare coursers vehicles within the county. This links in with the Norfolk system so allows coverage of the two counties, based on geographical policing areas and a specific hare coursing group. This system is divided into five groups making the information very specific to particular areas.

Enforcement

- 3.11 Because offences such as hare coursing often take place near to, or cross over county boundaries, the rural policing leads for Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Lincolnshire Constabularies made an agreement to share resources for rural policing operations for set days of action each year. This initiative will provide a significant policing resource and help disrupt and deter the organised crime groups who come into the region.
- 3.12 The Rural Policing Officers within Suffolk and Norfolk Constabularies have previously 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. Inspector Nick Stonehouse is currently re-writing a Joint Force Hunt Policy.
- 3.13 The Rural Policing Team holds pre and post season meetings with both the hunts various saboteur/hunt monitor groups.

Intelligence

- 3.14 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. The software being used is brand new and includes forwarding an email to rural officers to alert them to "hot listed" vehicles being detected by ANPR.
- 3.15 In conjunction with the National Farmers Union, the Constabulary has created 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. This group will now be independently chaired and provide a coercive approach to highlighted rural crime issues – for example fly tipping (which is not generally prosecuted by the police as this is the responsibility of Local Authorities).
- 3.16 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

- 3.17 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:-
1. Reviewing and increasing the use of Police Connect, FAST SMS and other social media to provide information and updates to the public;
 2. Creation of a Rural Communities Advisory Group, so the public have a forum to meet with the police and raise concerns and ask questions;
 3. Providing a formal process to ensure the performance for the delivery of Rural Policing Strategy is accountable and effectively managed;
 4. Regular meetings with farmers and land owners to ensure the service we provide is appropriate and to listen to their specific needs.

- 3.18 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 purchase of an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) and associated training and safety equipment has incurred some expenditure. However, this is now complete and the Rural Policing Team does now have this resource available.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

- 5.1 The Rural Policing Team has secured outside funding to produce a national training package on hare coursing. This is still in progress but will raise the Constabulary's profile within rural and wildlife policing.

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

Appendix 1

These are based on all crimes that are tagged as rural crime.

Crime	2016	2017	2018 (so Far)	Total
AGGRAVATED VEHICLE TAKING		3		3
ARSON	15	11	3	29
BICYCLE THEFT	1			1
BURGLARY - BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY		46	53	99
BURGLARY - RESIDENTIAL		24	30	54
BURGLARY IN A DWELLING	16	2		18
BURGLARY NON-DWELLING	145	37		182
CRIMINAL DAMAGE	84	66	31	181
INTERFERING WITH A MOTOR VEHICLE	4	4	1	9
MISC CRIMES AGAINST SOCIETY	7	7	8	22
OTHER OFFENCES PUBLIC ORDER	1			1
OTHER THEFT	99	108	65	272
POSSESSION OF WEAPONS	1	1		2
PUBLIC FEAR, ALARM OR DISTRESS	5	11	12	28
SHOPLIFTING	2	1		3
THEFT FROM A VEHICLE	17	15	3	35
THEFT FROM THE PERSON	1			1
THEFT OR UNAUTH TAKING OF A MOTOR VEH	7	10	3	20
VIOLENCE WITH INJURY	3	11	1	15
VIOLENCE WITHOUT INJURY	15	17	2	34
Grand Total	423	374	212	1009