

2021- 2025



Thames Valley Police & Criminal Justice Plan

JUNE 2021





Foreword

by Matthew Barber, Thames Valley Police & Crime Commissioner

In these pages, I set out my proposals for the next Police and Criminal Justice Plan for the Thames Valley. This is my vision for policing in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes and Oxfordshire.

Throughout the document are clear objectives that, as Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC), I will hold the Chief Constable accountable for delivering. Setting out a Police and Criminal Justice Plan is not an exhaustive process, but it does set the strategic priorities and the focus for the effort of the Force in the years to come. These priorities make clear the key areas for future work and the endeavour to bring clearer accountability and to focus on the outcomes for the public. In addition, future strategy documents will address specific areas of policing and criminal justice.

I have not met a single police officer who does not understand the need for the police to be scrutinised and held to high standards. In return, they expect strong leadership, both from their senior officers and the PCC, and a clear vision of what is expected. Officers in the Thames Valley place themselves in harm's way every day in order to keep the public safe and uphold the law. They deserve the respect of politicians and the public for their work. My vision for policing, encompassed in this plan, is for a clear focus on the priorities that matter the most to the public; police officers being empowered to make decisions to protect the public they serve and to remember that the police are the public in uniform. If we work together, public and the police, councils and the community, law enforcement and the judiciary, we can make the Thames Valley an even better and safer place to live for everyone.

Police & Crime Commissioner
Thames Valley



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Police & Criminal Justice Plan

This Police & Criminal Justice Plan sets out the five priorities I intend to focus on, starting from May 2021. This Plan has victims at its heart. Bringing criminals to justice is vital, but preventing people from becoming victims of crime in the first place is even more important, both through proactive crime prevention and through reducing reoffending.

The detailed implementation of the policing elements will be for the Chief Constable to determine through the Force's Strategic Plan, and I will hold him accountable for delivering these priorities.

Although not an exhaustive list, my Plan also includes a list of key policy areas that I will be developing during my period in office.





1. Strong local policing

POLICE & CRIMINAL JUSTICE PLAN

STRONG LOCAL POLICING
Preventing crime & protecting communities

WHAT SUCCESS WILL LOOK LIKE

- ▶ Supporting Neighbourhood Policing Teams
- ▶ A focus on crime prevention
- ▶ Improving communications with victims †
- ▶ Enhancing Community Speedwatch
- ▶ Maintaining low levels of burglaries †
- ▶ Reducing levels of rural crime
- ▶ Reducing levels of serious violence, including murder and other homicide †
- ▶ Reducing levels of neighbourhood crime and antisocial behaviour †
- ▶ Increasing confidence in victims to report domestic abuse †
- ▶ Maintaining the proportionate and appropriate use of stop and search to detect and deter crime
- ▶ Improving 101 and other contact services
- ▶ Regular community engagement to understand residents' concerns
- ▶ Working with the NHS and others to support the police in dealing with mental health issues

† Denotes areas of the plan that relate directly to the National Crime and Policing Measures.

Recruiting more police officers, supporting neighbourhood policing and focussing on driving down the crimes that matter most to the public.

Neighbourhood policing is the bedrock of law enforcement in the UK. New and emerging threats such as terrorism and high-tech crime rightly have created specialisms that are vital to protect the public in the modern world, but the significance of effective, visible, local policing cannot be overlooked. Even in the areas of counter-terrorism and serious organised crime, it is often neighbourhood police officers and police community support officers (PCSOs) that gather the vital intelligence or who are the first on the scene of an incident. We all know that the public not only expect the police to be visible, but that they feel safer when they are. This level of trust and confidence the police can give to communities is hugely valuable and their trust must be repaid if it is to be retained.

Each one of our communities should expect and receive the same highest standards of policing that Thames Valley can provide. Whether it is our towns and city centres where the concern of residents may be the night-time economy or isolated rural communities that may face vandalism and theft, the police response should always be proportionate, appropriate and understand the impact such incidents have on victims.

The purpose of prioritising local policing goes beyond just visibility. With the victim always at the heart of what we do, we must continue to drive down traditional acquisitive crime and reduce the fear of violence in all parts of Thames Valley. Neighbourhood policing is at the heart of this model and will be protected. Much of the focus of neighbourhood policing must be about the prevention of crime, keeping the public safe, deterring criminal activity and therefore reducing pressure on other parts of the system.

Locally based CID must enhance the quality of investigations, while communication with victims and witnesses needs to improve to ensure the public can contact the police easily, and that victims are kept up to date with the crimes that are affecting them.

The breadth of challenges faced by neighbourhood policing requires good problem-solving skills by police. These issues include vehicle crime, anti-social behaviour, criminal damage and dog theft.

Other issues such as speeding traffic also cause great concern in our communities and it is recognised that many of these cannot be solved by the police alone. Engaging with other organisations, especially our Community Safety Partnerships and community groups will provide the key to addressing the concerns of the public and allow frontline police officers to focus on fighting crime.



2. Fighting serious organised crime

WHAT SUCCESS WILL LOOK LIKE

- ▶ Continuing to develop the Violence Reduction Unit, identifying potential victims and perpetrators and enabling multi-agency interventions †
 - ▶ Reducing deaths from knife crime †
 - ▶ Increasing the number of disruptions and successful prosecutions for serious organised crime (SOC) †
 - ▶ Ensuring focus on SOC groups involved with acquisitive crime and exploitation
 - ▶ Ensuring regional resources are available to support local investigations
- Supporting early intervention work to prevent young people becoming either perpetrators or victims of crime**

† Denotes areas of the plan that relate directly to the National Crime and Policing Measures.

POLICE & CRIMINAL JUSTICE PLAN

FIGHTING SERIOUS ORGANISED CRIME
Protecting Vulnerable people

Cracking down on the threat from “county lines” drugs gangs to protect children from exploitation and abuse.

Serious organised crime can seem like a distant threat to many members of the public. Sadly, the effects of gangs and serious organised crime groups can often be seen in local communities. Whether it is the drug trade, serious violence such as knife crime, people trafficking or sexual abuse, some of the most vulnerable members of our society often become the victims of serious organised crime.

It can take many forms and Thames Valley already takes a regional lead through the South East Regional Organised Crime Unit (SEROCU). Throughout this Police & Criminal Justice Plan, the importance of strong neighbourhood policing is emphasised and once again, these crime gangs are not purely the remit of specialist officers, but also need to be tackled through strong local intelligence and action.

Sufficient resource needs to be dedicated to tackling these organised crime groups and ensure effective local and regional policing. Technology plays a role, as does collaboration with security and intelligence agencies and other police forces. Protection of the public is key, and this priority covers those threats that may harm any of us indiscriminately such as terrorism, as well as those that are targeted as experienced by victims of child abuse and exploitation.

The Force will continue to lead the way in tactics and techniques to tackle these gangs. As well as seeking to bring those responsible to justice through the courts, tactics will be employed to disrupt their activities, especially when this will safeguard the most vulnerable.

Especially when dealing with young people we must recognise that there is often a fine line between being a perpetrator or being a victim. Protection for these young and vulnerable victims is vital.

In tackling the exploitation of vulnerable adults and children, we will not lose sight of the high levels of acquisitive and environmental crime that is also perpetrated by serious organised crime groups. Resources invested in this area will have an impact in reducing many of the crimes that concern the public most in their communities.

In addressing the issue of drug misuse, we must tackle both the demand as well as the supply. Working in partnership with other agencies we must divert people away from drug use and ensure early intervention is in place to reduce youth offending and helping all partners to fulfil their obligations under the Serious Violence Duty.



3. Fighting cybercrime and fraud

FIGHTING FRAUD & CYBER CRIME
Fighting modern crimes

POLICE & CRIMINAL JUSTICE PLAN

WHAT SUCCESS WILL LOOK LIKE

- ▶ Improving education and awareness to help the public protect themselves from becoming victims †
- ▶ Working with national and regional partners to develop a more effective national response
- ▶ Increasing confidence in reporting cyber and fraud offences, resulting in an increase in these crimes being recorded crimes
- ▶ Increasing the number of successful cybercrime and fraud outcomes †
- ▶ Enhancing the expertise and capability within TVP and SEROCU to improve both prevention and investigation †

† Denotes areas of the plan that relate directly to the National Crime and Policing Measures.

Crime is changing and I will invest in the technology and resources the police need to protect the public online.

Whilst traditional acquisitive crime such as burglary (see Strong Local Policing) remains one of the public's greatest concerns, and undoubtedly can have a huge impact on victims, arguably a more insidious threat is gaining momentum.

We are all much more likely to be victims of cybercrime, often without even realising it, than we are to be a victim of a 'traditional' crime. Fraud and cybercrime covers a wide variety of offences, from corporate fraud within the banking industry that may stretch into billions of pounds, to scam emails that may seek to take small amounts from many people.

Investigating these crimes and bringing people to justice is incredibly complex. Law enforcement agencies across the UK need to improve performance in dealing with these issues domestically, let alone the challenge of tackling these offences on a global scale.

At a national level, I will continue to work with Government, national and regional law enforcement agencies towards a more effective and joined up system for dealing with these complex threats.

At a local level, I will continue to be proactive in educating the public and embracing the specialist technology and expertise necessary to pursue cyber criminals. Working through the existing regional structures, developing new collaborations and enhancing the Force's own capability, we will enhance Thames Valley's ability to protect the public from cybercrime.

Dealing with cybercrime is no longer just a specialism, as almost every incident of crime leaves a digital footprint. Ensuring that the Force has in place the resources, training and structures to ensure investigations can remain effective in a digital age is vital to maintaining public confidence, and fighting crime across the board.



4. Improving the criminal justice system

IMPROVING THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM
Reducing reoffending

POLICE & CRIMINAL JUSTICE PLAN

WHAT SUCCESS WILL LOOK LIKE

- ▶ Working with other criminal justice agencies to improve performance in dealing with crimes such as domestic abuse, rapes and serious sexual offences (RaSSO) †
- ▶ Improving victim satisfaction and experience of the criminal justice system †
- ▶ Increasing successful outcomes through the criminal justice system
- ▶ Reducing reoffending in the Thames Valley
- ▶ Supporting innovative projects in crime prevention and rehabilitation
- ▶ Continuing to provide high quality support for victims through Victims First †

† Denotes areas of the plan that relate directly to the National Crime and Policing Measures.

Supporting victims of crime, bringing more criminals to justice and reducing reoffending.

The public want to see criminals brought to justice, yet the police can rightly only be involved in part of that process. Prevention and detection is the role for Thames Valley Police, but there must always be a level of independence from other areas of the criminal justice system.

Police & Crime Commissioners have a wider remit and this is likely to grow further into other areas of the criminal justice system. Through partnerships such as the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB), the PCC can provide strong leadership and influence. Devolution of powers and budgets in other areas could see this role expand as PCCs are uniquely placed to have the convening power across all areas of criminal justice, whilst remaining publicly accountable.

Much work will still focus on policing, especially ensuring that evidence is gathered efficiently and effectively to ensure the Crown Prosecution Service can prosecute cases effectively. Yet a greater focus needs to be placed on getting cases through the courts successfully, improving access to courts through the use of technology and particularly around reducing reoffending.

The PCC will continue to provide support services for victims of crime through our own Victims First service, and will continue to support the voluntary and non-statutory sector working with both victims and the rehabilitation of offenders. In addition, recent changes in the Victims' Code will require police and partner agencies to enhance the way they communicate with victims of domestic abuse or sexual violence.

We must always recognise and support those victims of crime who are particularly vulnerable including those suffering from mental health issues and child witnesses of domestic abuse.

Supporting innovation will be key, as Thames Valley has already shown, for example in using GPS tagging of offenders and fast-tracking cases of domestic abuse through the courts.

The Local Criminal Justice Board provides a strong base on which to improve partnership working, including looking at broadening the membership of the Board and its sub-groups. Ultimately delivering a fair system of justice that provides justice for victims, protection of the innocent and stops criminals from reoffending must be our goal.



5. Tackling illegal encampments

TACKLING
ILLEGAL
ENCAMPMENTS
Enforcing with partners

POLICE
& CRIMINAL
JUSTICE
PLAN

WHAT SUCCESS WILL LOOK LIKE

- ▶ Ensuring that the police and local authorities establish (and keep under review) a clear strategy to respond to illegal encampments
- ▶ Reducing the number of illegal encampments across the Thames Valley
- ▶ Working with local authorities on the appropriate provision of sites
- ▶ Improving intelligence gathering and site security

Ensuring a fair but firm response to illegal encampments and reducing the effect on our communities.

At the peak of the season, illegal encampments can be a significant concern for residents across the Thames Valley. Currently, the initial trespass is rarely a police matter, but this is often accompanied by reports of anti-social behaviour, criminal damage, theft and intimidation.

Everyone should be treated equally before the law. There are undoubtedly individuals within the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) community who consider themselves above the law but equally the many law-abiding members of those nomadic communities should expect the same protection by the police and the same access to services such as healthcare, as permanent residents. This is often seen as a conflict, with static communities either feeling the authorities turn a blind eye, or GRT communities feeling victimised.

The answer is a “firm but fair” approach that has support from representatives of the GRT communities and local authorities. Tackling the criminal elements within GRT communities and making them unwelcome in the Thames Valley is to the benefit of both permanent residents, and the law-abiding majority of travellers who are all too often victimised because of their background.

There needs to be a redoubling of the efforts of partnership working with local authorities and landowners to meet the expectation of swift action. Local police areas need to be empowered to take action swiftly to tackle illegal encampments and associated criminality. Local authorities should meet the needs of the law-abiding GRT community and all partners including the police will need to work with communities to tackle prejudice and discrimination.

Having campaigned for a change in the law, which is now being progressed by the Government, I will continue to engage with politicians locally and nationally to ensure we strike the right balance and give the police and local authorities the right powers and responsibilities to tackle the issue.



Developing plans for Safer Communities

During my term of office, I intend to expand on the contents of this Police & Criminal Justice Plan to develop more focussed strategies to make Thames Valley a safer place to live.

These strategy documents will be developed jointly with Thames Valley Police and, where appropriate, other partners, and will set out an agreed approach. Below is an indicative list of particular areas of focus that may warrant further policy development; it is not intended to be definitive. Future strategies will form part of my overall Police & Criminal Justice Plan, and the Chief Constable will be expected to deliver the agreed objective and to be held to account for the outcomes.

Strong local policing

- ▶ Rural crime
- ▶ Business crime
- ▶ Neighbourhood policing
- ▶ Road safety and speeding (including Community Speedwatch)
- ▶ Dog theft and reducing the trade in stolen pets

Serious organised crime

- ▶ Sexual exploitation and non-domestic child abuse
- ▶ Serious Organised Acquisitive Crime
- ▶ Serious violence and knife crime
- ▶ Tackling illegal drugs

Cybercrime and fraud

- ▶ Reporting of cybercrime and fraud
- ▶ Enabling digital investigations
- ▶ Preventing cybercrime and fraud

Improving the criminal justice system

- ▶ Improving justice for victims
- ▶ Reducing reoffending
- ▶ Support for victims outside of the criminal justice system
- ▶ Domestic abuse (including children)
- ▶ Rape & Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO)
- ▶ Mental health in policing and the criminal justice system

Tackling illegal encampments

- ▶ Joint protocol with local authorities

Other strategies to be developed

- ▶ Police officer and staff recruitment and retention
- ▶ Community Safety Partnership funding
- ▶ Improving contact management
- ▶ Specialist capabilities
- ▶ Police Officer welfare
- ▶ Emergency Services Collaboration
- ▶ Fly-tipping and environmental crime
- ▶ Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR)



Governance and accountability

Through regular meetings held in public and in private, I will hold the Chief Constable to account for his leadership of Thames Valley Police and the delivery of an efficient and effective police service. Scrutiny of Force performance and progress against my Police & Criminal Justice Plan will be published on my website.

My plan has regard to and links strongly with the Government's National Crime and Policing Measures. In holding the Chief Constable to account I will also have regard to the Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR) as set out in accordance with Section 77 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, as well as recommendations from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS)

The Government has been clear that PCCs must achieve significant reductions in crime and restore the public's confidence in the criminal justice system. These extra measures are intended as an effective way to work with the police towards achieving these key national priorities, and will complement those success measures as set out in my plan.



Resources

Thames Valley Police and Criminal Justice Funding

It is essential that I take a long-term view of the spending and funding pressures facing policing, criminal justice and victim related services in setting and approving the annual budget and council tax for this and future years.

To do this, I will work with the Chief Constable to develop a detailed annual revenue budget, capital programme and medium term financial plans.

I will work with the Government, especially the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice, to secure the best level of funding possible for Thames Valley and consider the level of council tax precept in light of local spending pressures, and the impact on households.

I will work with the Force to continue the work in the current Efficiency and Effectiveness Review in order to ensure resources are well used, and funding is focussed on delivering frontline services that protect the public.

Besides revenue spending on day-to-day operational activities of more than £475 million, we incur capital expenditure on buildings, ICT, other operational assets such as vehicles, plus major items of plant and equipment that have a longer-term life. Over the next four-year period, we plan to spend over £90 million on capital assets, funded from a combination of capital receipts, capital grants, revenue and capital reserves, revenue contributions and third party contributions. This investment in infrastructure is vital in ensuring police officers in Thames Valley have the tools and the support they need to tackle crime.

Commissioning and Grant Funding

I will continue to support local authorities with a budget of approximately £3 million through the Community Safety Fund. Under a revised funding formula, this spending will support Community Safety Partnership initiatives that support my Police & Criminal Justice Plan, such as crime prevention schemes or work to reduce reoffending.

I receive an annual grant from the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) to commission services for victims and witnesses of crime of around £2.7 million. Where viable, I will also seek additional funding to support additional services for victims, particularly those who have suffered domestic abuse or sexual violence.

The Police Property Act Fund is created from the proceeds of sale of goods recovered by the police that cannot be returned to their original owner. I will provide grant funding to support local voluntary and community groups that are working to improve the lives of people living in the Thames Valley Police area, and who can demonstrate that their activity or project contributes to meeting the objectives as set out in this Police and Criminal Justice Plan.

Further details of both funding of Thames Valley Police and of my Commissioning and Grant Funding can be found on my website www.thamesvalley-pcc.gov.uk





For further information about the PCC, his plan, the budget or how you can get involved, get in touch with us using the contact email provided below or visit www.thamesvalley-pcc.gov.uk

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