

Report to the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel

Title: Topical Issues

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Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-56400751>

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Bill covers a wide range of community safety issues and seeks to introduce measures which aim to have an impact on victims of crime, those who perpetrate crimes, and wider community safety.

What powers do police have now?

If the police want to place restrictions on a protest, they generally have to show it may result in "serious public disorder, serious damage to property or serious disruption to the life of the community". They can also impose specific measures on the routes of marches. When it comes to major events, such details are typically thrashed out with the organisers weeks in advance.

How will the bill change those powers?

Police chiefs will be able to put more conditions on static protests.

They will be able to:

- Impose a start and finish time
- Set noise limits
- Apply these rules to a demonstration by just one person

Taken to an extreme, let's say there's an individual holding a protest placard, while blasting out their views on a speaker. If they refuse to follow police directions over how they should conduct their protest, they could be fined up to £2,500.

It will also become a crime to fail to follow restrictions the protesters "ought" to have known about, even if they have not received a direct order from an officer.

At present, police need to prove protesters knew they had been told to move on, before they can be said to have broken the law.

The proposed law includes an offence of "intentionally or recklessly causing public nuisance". This is designed to stop people occupying public spaces, hanging off bridges, gluing themselves to windows, or employing other protest tactics to make themselves both seen and heard.

One final measure clarifies that damage to memorials could lead to up to 10 years in prison. This follows the toppling of a statue of slave trader Edward Colston in Bristol.

What about human rights?

The right to protest and express yourself is enshrined in the Human Rights Act. Police commanders have to show they have taken this into account. But that right is not absolute. Protests can be limited by police if they believe they have good reason to impose restrictions on an event to ensure public safety, or to prevent crime.

The Home Office insists its proposals will respect human rights. But the problem is the history of public protest is littered with long and complex legal battles over whether police have used their powers properly.

One of the most important cases - about the police's power to contain a crowd for an indefinite period - took 11 years of courtroom arguments to reach the conclusion that the tactic was lawful.

What do critics say?

Amnesty International UK predicts that if the measures become law, there will be more scenes like those at the Clapham Common vigil for Sarah Everard.

Rights of Women, a campaign group, says the bill fails to introduce long-called-for measures that could reduce violence against women and girls. However, the government says that other parts of the legislation toughen sentencing for serious violent and sexual offences and introduce new police bail rules for suspects under investigation.

The bill will also place a legal duty on police and local authorities to come up with a joint action plan to tackle serious violence.

What else does the legislation propose?

- Changing sentencing rules so that serious criminals spend more time in jail before they can be conditionally released
- Judges will be allowed to consider jailing child murderers for their entire lives
- Maximum sentences for low-level assaults against emergency service workers doubled to two years
- On terrorism, the bill creates powers to more closely monitor offenders released from prison
- Community sentences for less serious crime to address underlying problems in offenders' lives
- Changes to sexual offences law to tackle abusive adults in positions of trust, such as sports coaches and religious figures

MPs back government's crime bill: What's in it and why it's caused controversy after Sarah Everard's death

<https://news.sky.com/story/mps-back-governments-crime-bill-whats-in-it-and-why-its-caused-controversy-after-sarah-everards-death-12246992>

Press Release from Office of PCC - Restart and relaunch for Community Speedwatch in 2021

Speeding traffic is a regular and emotive concern for communities across Thames Valley and a pilot scheme being announced today is set to help tackle the problem.

Volunteers from across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire are on hold currently due to lockdown regulations. As the restrictions are being lifted, local community groups will be able to resume their speedwatch activities as soon as possible but this is only the first step in a revolution in roads safety across Thames Valley.

Thanks to a new partnership with Community Speedwatch online, the not-for-profit social enterprise that provides a platform for speedwatch schemes. Thames Valley, following a successful pilot period, will consolidate the partnership thus taking a major step forward in the way we tackle and improve road safety.

When restrictions are lifted, schemes will be able to restart their former activity to keep their communities safe by checking for speeding vehicles. At the same time, a pilot scheme will be launched to trial a new system, supporting and training volunteers, as well as capturing the data for community speedwatch in order to better analyse data for potential police activity

Beginning with one pilot in Buckinghamshire, the scheme is then expected to be trialled in other locations across Oxfordshire and Berkshire over a six-month period and, if successful, will become the model for all community speedwatch schemes in the Thames Valley.

Championed by the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner, new speedwatch groups will have the opportunity to borrow speed detection equipment and devices, helping volunteers to assist in the battle against speeding motorists.

CSW Online provides bespoke administrative tools that make the volunteers' invested efforts worthwhile."

Before community teams can be deployed to the roadside, they will undergo a number of training sessions, both online and at roadside, to ensure risk assessments have been completed and protocols have been adhered to.

The new online platform allows group-related activities to be self-regulated via an online calendar and also provides vehicle make recognition training. DVLA pre-checks logged registration numbers for authenticity before automatically passing data on to the police for further processing.

Statement by Home Secretary Concluding on Part One of the Police and Crime Commissioner Review

“I am pleased to set out to the House findings from the first part of our two-part Review into the role of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs).

The Government’s manifesto committed to strengthening the accountability of PCCs and expanding their role. The public want to see a reduction in crime and PCCs are elected to deliver on the people’s priorities. Eight years on from their introduction, it is the right time to step back and consider how we can better ensure that the public can hold PCCs to account for the performance of their force.

In delivering the recommendations from Part One of the Review, we will make it easier for the public to make an informed decision about the record of their PCC at the ballot box by strengthening accountability and improving transparency. The recommendations set out below apply to PCCs and mayors with PCC functions.

Part One of our internal Review began in late July and collated views and evidence from stakeholders across policing, fire and local government as well as voluntary and community organisations. Through polling and focus groups the Review also took account of public views and opinions. We focussed on changes required to sharpen the model which, where possible, can be delivered ahead of the 2021 PCC elections.

On policing, the Home Office will bring forward a range of measures which will: strengthen PCC accountability; improve their transparency to the public; clarify the relationship between PCCs and Chief Constables; bring more consistency to the PCC role; raise professional standards; and improve the checks and balances currently in place.

The Review concluded there was more to be done to explain the role of PCCs and make their record on crime more transparent to the voting public, thus enhancing their accountability. To help achieve this:

- The Home Office will amend the Specified Information Order to require PCCs to provide a narrative on their force’s performance against the Government’s crime measures, and Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) force performance reports. The Specified Information Order currently places a duty on PCCs to publish certain information within specified timeframes, to ensure the public have the information they need to hold their Commissioner to account at the ballot box.
- In line with the Government’s manifesto position in favour of First Past the Post, which provides for strong and clear local accountability, and reflects that transferable voting systems were rejected by the British people in the 2011 nationwide referendum, the Home Office will work with the Cabinet Office and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to change the voting system for all Combined Authority Mayors, the Mayor of London and PCCs to First Past the Post. This change will require primary legislation, which we will bring forward when Parliamentary time allows.

We concluded there are clear steps we can take to sharpen local accountability and ensure the framework guiding the relationship with Chief Constables is clarified:

- The Home Office will work with the College of Policing, Association of Police and Crime Commissioners and National Police Chiefs' Council to build on the Accountability Guidance already in place, including in relation to the performance management of Chief Constables, to help to promote and embed a positive relationship between Chief Constables and PCCs.
- The Home Office will consult on potential changes to the Policing Protocol Order 2011 to provide a 'brighter-line' on the boundaries of operational independence and reflect changes in the relationship between the parties to the Protocol which have taken place over time. The Protocol sets out how the policing governance relationships should work, including that of the Home Secretary, and clarifies the roles and responsibilities of PCCs, Chief Constables and Police and Crime Panels.
- The Home Office will also legislate to amend Section 38 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, to make the Chief Constable dismissal process more rigorous and transparent, by requiring a PCC to give the Chief Constable written notice (including grounds), as the first stage of the dismissal process; allowing for the Chief to provide HMCIC a response to those grounds; and introducing some form of time limit or review interval on a Chief Constable's suspension from office. The Home Office will also work with the College of Policing, NPCC and APCC to develop a framework for the use of independent mediation in appropriate circumstances.
- We will also seek to address the HMICFRS recommendations included in its 'Leading Lights' (September 2019) report, looking into the role of the College of Policing in the senior recruitment process. We will work with stakeholders to address the issues raised through this review in relation to fixed term appointments.
- To improve scrutiny, the Home Office will work with the Local Government Association (LGA) to develop a good governance training package for Police and Crime Panels.
- Part Two of the Review will also allow us to consider the role of the Independent Office of Police Complaints (IOPC) with respect to their handling of complaints made about the conduct of PCCs and their deputies.

The Review concluded more should be done to ensure that all PCCs adopt best practice and, given our later recommendations on fire, there is now a need to improve the resilience of the Office of the PCC:

- We recommend that the APCC works with the College of Policing to build on the policing Knowledge Hub to develop a 'what works' compendium for PCCs.
- The Home Office and APCC will jointly develop a comprehensive set of non-statutory guidance on the core elements of the PCC role. In conjunction, the APCC should deliver a formal programme of induction for new and returning PCCs post-elections in May 2021.
- To enhance resilience and capacity of PCCs, given our intention to expand the role into fire, the Home Office will bring forward legislation to mandate that each PCC must appoint a Deputy (of the same political party where the PCC represents a political party). In the interim, we will issue guidance to PCCs' offices requesting that a formal succession plan is put into place to deal with vacancy and incapacitation, involving the Police and Crime Panel in those discussions as necessary. This will not apply to mayors with PCC functions, where legislation already mandates that a Deputy Mayor must be in place.
- To ensure PCCs have the levers they need to tackle crime, in Part Two of the Review, the Home Office will consult on giving a General Power of Competence (as afforded to Local Authorities) to all PCCs, to potentially help PCCs with the role they

play in the wider crime and criminal justice landscape, and will consider partnership arrangements more fully.

On fire, the Government is clear that further reform of fire and rescue is required in order to respond to the recommendations from Phase 1 of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, the Kerslake Review and to build on the findings from Sir Thomas Winsor's State of Fire and Rescue Report. Our reform agenda will focus on three key areas: people; professionalism; and governance. Taken together, improvements in these areas will help deliver higher standards and greater consistency across fire and rescue services.

The Review kick-started our work on fire service governance and the findings signalled strong support for a directly elected individual taking on fire functions to help simplify and strengthen the governance of fire and rescue services across England. The Home Office will be launching a consultative White Paper on fire reform later this year. The White Paper will be used to set out our reform agenda in further detail and explore the Review proposals on fire governance which include:

- Consulting on whether to mandate the transfer of fire and rescue functions to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner model across England where boundaries are coterminous, unless there is an option to transfer fire governance directly to an elected Mayor.
- Consulting on how to address coterminosity challenges, including in the South West.
- Legislating to create operational independence for Chief Fire Officers and to clearly separate and delineate strategic and operational planning for fire and rescue.
- Considering options to clarify the legal entities within the PFCC model.

With regard to mayoral devolution, this Review has cemented our view that the join up of public safety functions under a combined authority mayor has the potential to offer wider levers to prevent crime. We will take steps to remove barriers to more mayors taking on these functions and will work with MHCLG to develop the forthcoming Devolution and Local Recovery White Paper with that longer-term trajectory in mind.

Part Two of the Review will begin after the 2021 elections and will allow us to consider further ways to strengthen and expand efforts to help cut crime. It will focus on longer-term reforms and the potential for wider efficiencies to be made, with a view to implementation ahead of the 2024 elections. Terms of reference for Part Two of the Review will be published in this House at the appropriate time.

I would like to put on record my thanks to our Advisory Group which supported the first part of this Review, comprising senior external stakeholders with expertise in the policing and fire sectors.”

Nottinghamshire Police records misogyny as a hate crime

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-nottinghamshire-36775398>

Dog Thefts in Thames Valley

<https://www.countryliving.com/uk/wildlife/pets/a35675362/dog-thieves-target-homes-coloured-elastic-bands/>

Dog owners are being warned after reports found thieves are targeting pedigree dogs by leaving coloured elastic bands outside the home where they live, a local animal warden has said.

The Public Protection Partnership (PPP) — who deal with animal welfare issues in Bracknell Forest, West Berkshire and Wokingham Borough — explained that thieves are putting the coloured bands around gateposts or wheelie bins to remember where the dogs live.

"We have recently been made aware that a number of properties in the South Oxfordshire area have seemingly been marked," the PPA told Bracknell News. "Clearly this is of concern to all dog owners, and we ask that that you all remain vigilant and where possible to report this either online via the Thames Valley Police website or on the 101 number."

With reports finding an increase in the number of elastic bands spotted, a spokesperson from the PPA told owners to ensure their dogs are less visible. "We would further advise that if your dog stays in the house, then move its location to a harder to reach area and less visible to the outside," they said. "Lastly, do not post anything on social media with respect to your dog, or any potential litters."

In similar news, another report also found that more dog owners are purchasing lockable, steel-core collars and leads that cannot be cut by thieves as they walk their pets. With dog theft rising as a result of the pandemic, owners are now having to take more drastic measures to keep their pups safe.

Remember to always contact your local police if you spot anything unusual that may put your dog in danger.

<https://www.bucksfreepress.co.uk/news/19158668.police-address-concerns-dog-thefts-area/>

<https://www.miltonkeynes.co.uk/news/crime/bid-to-step-up-task-force-in-milton-keynes-to-stop-pets-being-stolen-as-cases-soar-nationwide-3166426>

<https://www.readingchronicle.co.uk/news/19118064.dog-theft-warning-houses-targeted-coloured-elastic-bands/>

Thames Valley Police to pilot new orders to tackle knife crime

<https://www.windsorobserver.co.uk/news/19165751.thames-valley-police-pilot-new-orders-tackle-knife-crime/>

THE Home Secretary has confirmed that Thames Valley Police (TVP) will be one of four forces to trial the introduction of new post-conviction powers to further tackle knife crime and violence. TVP, alongside West Midlands, Merseyside and Sussex, will trial the introduction of new Serious Violence Reduction Orders (SVROs).

The court orders are designed to ensure convicted offenders receive additional interventions and support to help prevent their reoffending.

They will give police enhanced stop and search powers so that those who continue to carry a knife, or an offensive weapon are more likely to be caught and put in prison.

They will also help protect vulnerable offenders from being drawn into further exploitation by criminal gangs, by acting as a deterrent to any further weapons carrying.

Targeted use of stop and search, as part of a wider approach to intervene and support offenders, will help to safeguard those communities most at risk.

The pilot will test how well the orders deter violent offenders from carrying weapons, before a decision is made on national roll out.

Thames Valley Police receive funding to tackle Knife Crime

<https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/19146807.thames-valley-police-get-extra-money-stop-knife-crime/>

Funding Boost helps TVP communicate with Autistic People

<https://www.maidenhead-advertiser.co.uk/news/maidenhead/166335/funding-boost-helps-police-communicate-with-autistic-people.html>