

<b>SCRUTINY COMMISSION FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES</b>	<b>Agenda Item No. 7</b>
<b>12 JANUARY 2015</b>	<b>Public Report</b>

## **Report of the Head of Housing and Health Improvement and the Head of Community and Safety Services**

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### **KEEPING RURAL COMMUNITIES SAFE**

#### **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members of the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities with an overview of the activities that are and could be delivered in the rural areas of Peterborough to ensure that crime levels within the rural community remain relatively low. The report describes what activities are already in existence and explores some sustainable alternatives that would maintain safety and confidence in rural communities with a more local focus within a very challenging financial landscape.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the committee scrutinise the content of this report.
- 2.2 That the Committee prioritise the schemes contained in this report or identify alternative schemes. Officers will then develop the business cases for these schemes further to inform a debate at a future Committee meeting ahead of any recommendations being made.

#### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Our rural area comprises 26,307 hectares which is 77% of Peterborough City Council's Land Mass and contains 21,776 residents. This is 12% of the overall population. The rural wards of Peterborough typically accounted for 5.3% of all crime within the city between October 2013 to September 2014. However there are disproportionate anomalies of significance:

- Burglary Non Dwelling (9.6%)
- Theft from Vehicle (9.3%)
- Vehicle Crime (9%)

A typical example of offences in these categories include theft of heating oil and diesel from vehicles.

- 3.2 It is accepted that anecdotal evidence suggests that these offence types remain considerably under-reported and are likely to have higher rates than those which crime data can actually provide currently.

- 3.3 The table and corresponding chart below shows, by rural and urban areas within Peterborough, the count and rate per thousand population across a selection of crime types. In general, there is a lower observed rate of recorded crime per population within rural areas than those observed in urban areas.

**October 2013 to September 2014.**

Crime type	Rural		Urban		Peterborough UA		Proportion in rural wards
	Rural	Rural rate/1000	Urban	Urban Rate/1000	Total	Total rate/1000	
Total Crime	869	39.9	15411	95.2	16280	88.7	5.3%
Victim Based Crime	822	37.7	13739	84.9	14561	79.3	5.6%
ASB	415	19.1	9660	59.7	10075	54.9	4.1%
Domestic Violence	215	9.9	4621	28.6	4836	26.3	4.4%
Alcohol related incidents	130	6.0	3693	22.8	3823	20.8	3.4%
All Violent Crime	94	4.3	3056	18.9	3150	17.2	3.0%
Serious Acquisitive Crime	180	8.3	2268	14.0	2448	13.3	7.4%
Criminal Damage	138	6.3	2010	12.4	2148	11.7	6.4%
Theft from Shop	43	2.0	1621	10.0	1664	9.1	2.6%
Vehicle Crime	130	6.0	1320	8.2	1450	7.9	9.0%
Assault with Injury	42	1.9	1244	7.7	1286	7.0	3.3%
Theft from Vehicle	106	4.9	1033	6.4	1139	6.2	9.3%
Burglary Non Dwelling	94	4.3	887	5.5	981	5.3	9.6%
Pedal Cycle Theft	8	0.4	876	5.4	884	4.8	0.9%
Burglary Dwelling	45	2.1	702	4.3	747	4.1	6.0%
Theft of Vehicle	24	1.1	287	1.8	311	1.7	7.7%
Robbery	5	0.2	246	1.5	251	1.4	2.0%

- 3.4 It should be noted that those crimes that have a high risk factor, e.g. Domestic Abuse or Robbery, are significantly more likely to occur in urban areas than rural. It could therefore be suggested that the rural community is a safer place in which to live. In addition, it is for these reasons that reducing resources from all agencies are more focused to urban areas as a prioritisation culture develops.
- 3.5 However, this does not negate the fundamental fact that the community living in rural areas deserve to be provided with a service that makes them safe and as importantly feel safe. Therefore it is important that the Council explores different sustainable initiatives that achieve this, in a reducing budget environment.

### 3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 A number of initiatives are already planned or underway. For example:

- Cambridgeshire Constabulary has recently launched the Rural Special Constable Scheme. It consists of six Special Constables (working from Police HQ) who will be tasked to concentrate on rural crime across the county when they are on duty. This is the first step and if successful it is hoped that it will be rolled out to each district.
- There is a centrally based rural crime team consisting of three officers and a PCSO who work alongside Countryside Watch and other partners. This deals with crime that is specific to the rural community and co-ordinates operations. For example, they have recently conducted a joint operation with HMRC and recovered a large amount of red diesel (believed to be stolen) and a vehicle which was running on red diesel. The team also shares intelligence with partner agencies (for example the HMRC are given offender addresses so

that they can carry out follow-up visits). One recent example resulted in them finding a factory that was laundering the red chemical out of red diesel.

- The current Rural Crime tactical priorities are:
  - Hare Coursing (due to the time of year; much of the activity will be in the area of Thorney)
  - Fuel Theft (intelligence led as the above example demonstrates)
  - Illegal fish poaching (with Environment Agency), and deer poaching (activity being centred at the Milton and Elton Estates)
  - Preventative work linked to seasonal crimes e.g. Turkey and Christmas tree thefts that increase in the winter months.
- It is acknowledged that speeding is a perceived issue for the rural community. Cambridgeshire Constabulary and the Council's Road Safety team continue to support Community Speed Watch by providing equipment and administrative support.
- Countryside Watch continues to be very active in the area and is a great tool for the community to circulate intelligence with each other as well as with Cambridgeshire Constabulary and the community safety partnership.

4.2 There are a number of other sustainable schemes for the Commission to consider and these are described below. In all cases these schemes would require significant investment of time and potentially financial resource, and so the Committee need to consider the implications of this as part of their discussions. The Committee are asked to prioritise the list of options with a view to more detailed and costed plans being developed by officers and brought back to a future meeting for further debate prior to recommendations being made. Some of the options for consideration are as follows:

#### 4.2.1 Rural Watch Patrols

Countryside Watch and Farm Watch are part of the Neighborhood Watch scheme and operate specifically to serve farm and rural land owners. At various times of the year, Peterborough could conduct 'Rural watch patrol' evenings, where members of the Countryside Watch patrol their own land in their own vehicles and phone in suspect sightings/occurrence to the Force Control Room, who in turn dispatch officers to these sightings.

#### 4.2.2 Rural Volunteers

A volunteer scheme could be developed and implemented through the Community Capacity team or with our voluntary sector partners that would co-ordinate volunteers to patrol in high visibility jackets. These would need to have some affiliation to the community/village that they are patrolling. They would be briefed by the Council so that they are aware of local issues and would have a single point of contact to report non-emergency issues back to. These would be non-confrontational roles with nothing more than citizen powers. Their sole purpose would be to reassure the community and report matters to the relevant authorities, similar to the Council's former Street Leaders scheme.

#### 4.2.3 Rural Community Investigators

This again would be a voluntary scheme. However, the volunteers would not patrol in high visibility jackets but would conduct low level investigation patrol work. For example, they could be tasked by the Council's environmental team to establish the location of a report of a fly tipping incident or graffiti. They would then do an initial investigation by seeing if they can locate the offending articles. Finally by embracing new technology they would report back their results using identified specific points of contact. Not only will this empower the community but reduce the time that signal crimes are visible. By doing this there will be a reduction in the fear of crime within the community. Finally this also allows the partner agencies to be more efficient with their resources and time.

#### 4.2.4 Rural Specials

It has been agreed by the Constabulary that if persons are identified within a rural village or community who have the skills and abilities to become a Special Constable then a proportion of their time will be allocated to their own community once they have completed their probationary

period. New technology advances will allow the officer to book on from home and be a truly local officer. Whilst this will be a big advantage to the community, the period of training can take up to six months to complete, the officer will be called away for countywide initiatives and training and will only be able to carry out this role in their spare time. However the advantages include having Specials who are committed to their own community and are able to use their local knowledge of the area and people.

#### 4.2.5 Employers Special Scheme (ESP)

This scheme would seek to develop partnerships between employers, their staff and Cambridgeshire Constabulary. It would ask rural companies to encourage their members to become volunteer Special Constables and (depending upon the individual circumstances of the organisation) agree to further support their staff members by assisting them in the performance of their duties. An example would be agreeing to allow the volunteer to do 4 hours of duty in the company's time if they have already done 16 voluntary hours.

There are likely to be a number of benefits to the communities of Peterborough. The East of England Regional Economic Strategy (RES) identifies Greater Peterborough as an engine of growth with major benefits to the economic and social well-being of its rural hinterlands and market towns.

For the residents, businesses and visitors to the area ESP will bring:

- Increased direct engagement with the Council, Police and other agencies
- Increased reassurance due to a more visible policing presence on the streets
- Increased public confidence in the Police and wider public sector
- Greater resources for tackling crime and disorder, resulting in lower levels of crime and a higher sense of security

To Employers in the rural areas ESP will bring:

- Further evidence of supporting their local communities and of their commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility
- Increased direct engagement with local Police and other agencies
- Promotion of the Company and its contribution to community safety helping to raise brand awareness
- Staff development at little or no cost
- Training for staff in problem solving, communication, customer service, conflict management and a host of other subjects that build confidence and are directly transferable to their day job
- Improved staff morale and motivation
- Greater staff retention and lower recruitment costs

To staff/specials ESP will bring:

- Personal development opportunities
- Enhanced career development prospects
- The opportunity to give something back to the community
- Fulfilment and improved relationship with employer

#### 4.2.6 National Citizen Service

The National Citizen Service (NCS) is open to all 16 and 17 year-olds in England. It helps build skills for work and life, take on new challenges and meet new friends. It runs in the spring, summer and autumn. The youngsters have a short time away from home and take part in a team project that will help their community.

NCS brings together young people from different backgrounds and helps them develop greater confidence, self-awareness and responsibility. It encourages personal and social development by working on skills such as leadership, teamwork and communication.

Participants develop a social action project to deal with a local issue they're passionate about, and spend 30 hours putting the project into action in their community.

Peterborough City Council currently deliver the scheme in Peterborough on behalf of the national scheme. It is currently an 'opt in' scheme, where participants chose to take part, although we are currently looking at whether this could be an 'opt out' scheme instead, therefore ensuring greater participation.

A specific rural-focussed model could be developed to attract young people living in rural communities onto the scheme, helping to foster greater community awareness and belonging at an early age.

#### 4.2.7 Neighbourhood Warden Schemes

A Neighbourhood Warden scheme would aim to improve quality of life by providing a uniformed (non-Police) presence in residential areas to address issues of fear of crime and anti-social behaviour. Wardens could promote community safety, contribute to community development and assist with environmental improvements and housing management. They could help deliver local crime and disorder reduction targets, and act as the 'eyes and ears' of the Council, Police, and community.

Wardens could fulfil a range of key functions through different methods. These could include crime prevention (through mobile patrols, identifying design improvements and promoting neighbourhood watches), environmental improvements (through work as resident caretakers providing information to residents on maintenance services and liaising with agencies), housing management (through checking empty properties and visiting tenants) and community development (through promoting residents' associations, organising activities and consulting with residents over services).

There is no single model of neighbourhood wardens: they can be tailored to meet the needs of local residents, work with different agencies and complement a multitude of other services and activities.

#### 4.2.8 Street Leaders

The volunteer Street Leader scheme is designed to support people who are concerned about their local environment and want to work in partnership to make noticeable improvements.

Street Leaders can be anyone living in the area who is willing to look out for problems in their communities. The scheme is also open to any business or organisations that have a collective interest in helping make a difference in the community.

Street Leaders don't have to give up a set amount of time as the role of Street Leader can become part of everyday life. The Street Leader could look out for the street they live in, the places they regularly travel through on their way to work, school, shops or while walking the dog.

#### 4.2.9 Neighbourhood Watch

Neighbourhood Watch is about local communities working together and with the Police to help make their neighbourhood safer. Neighbourhood Watch schemes can help reduce crime in local areas, and are a great way to help people protect themselves, their family, friends and home. They are also a great way to create community spirit.

There are currently 71 neighbourhood watch schemes in the rural wards of the City:

- 11 in Eye & Thorney Ward
- 5 in Newborough Ward
- 12 in Barnack Ward
- 15 in Glinton & Wittering Ward
- 28 in Northborough Ward

Where schemes work effectively with both Police and other partner agencies the areas do not experience as many problems as non-Neighbourhood Watch areas. The setting up of new schemes is led by Neighbourhood Watch with Police support and there is a committee for Peterborough.

#### 4.2.10 Utilisation of existing community groups

Existing groups that meet in the community already could be approached about linking in their activities with issues/needs in the community, for example:

- Women's Institute
- Friendship Groups
- Ramblers
- Mother and Toddler Groups
- Guides
- Scouts
- Hospital transport
- U3A
- Running Clubs
- Cycling Clubs

#### 4.2.11 Regular Updates

One of the ways rural residents can keep up to date on what is happening in their areas is by signing up to the Police eCops email alert scheme. Subscribers receive regular updates about crime and anti-social behaviour in their area, as well as feedback from the Police about what they're doing to tackle it. Policing teams can also be emailed through eCops to share concerns or help local officers with their enquiries, providing feedback on incidents or appeals for information. eCops is a free service and enables residents to access the local policing team when it is convenient for them.

### 4. **IMPLICATIONS**

As previously mentioned, any new schemes specific to rural communities would require investment of time and potentially finance.

### 5. **CONSULTATION**

The options contained in this report have been developed with the input of Cambridgeshire Police.

### 6. **EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

That the committee discusses the contents of the report, and prioritises the schemes they think would benefit the rural area most or identify alternative schemes.

### 7. **NEXT STEPS**

That the agreed list of prioritised or alternative schemes is developed further to inform a debate at a future Committee meeting ahead of any recommendations being made.

### 8. **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

None

### 10. **APPENDICES**

None