

CAMBRIDGESHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL	Agenda Item No. 13
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Report of the Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Commissioner

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CALL HANDLING UPDATE

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Police and Crime Panel (“the Panel”) with an update on Cambridgeshire Constabulary’s (“the Constabulary”) 101 call handling function.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. To note the report.

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE

- 3.1 Item 6 – To review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, by the Commissioner in connection with the discharge of the Commissioner’s functions.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Policing Protocol Order 2011 (“the Protocol”) sets out some key guiding principles for all Police and Crime Commissioners, Chief Constables and Police and Crime Panels.

- 4.2 Under the Protocol, the Police and Crime Commissioner (“the Commissioner”) has the legal power to scrutinise, support and challenge the overall performance of the Constabulary and hold the Chief Constable to account for the performance of the Constabulary’s officers and staff. The Protocol is clear that the Commissioner must not fetter the operational independence of the Constabulary and the Chief Constable. Call handling is an operational matter.

- 4.3 In turn, the Protocol enables the Panel to scrutinise the Commissioner in the exercise of his statutory functions, but does not provide for the Panel to scrutinise the Chief Constable. However, in the spirit of the Protocol to enhance policing for local communities, the Commissioner has provided this report which predominately relates to the actions of the Constabulary.

- 4.4 Since his election in November 2012 the Commissioner has focussed on the Constabulary’s call handling performance in response to public concerns. As such, the Commissioner has pledged in his Police and Crime Plan that he *“wants to see better and faster response to all telephone calls, not just 999 calls. The aim should be to answer every call within 30 seconds”*.

- 4.5 The Commissioner does not set arbitrary targets for operational policing which can hinder the overriding need to ‘do the right thing in the right way’. This ethos is in line with the Home Secretary’s view that ‘targets distort operational reality’ and can cause perverse outcomes. Nonetheless, the Commissioner has held the Chief Constable to account by calling for regular reports to his Business Coordination Board (“the Board”) on the Constabulary’s call handling performance.

4.6 To supplement his other communications with the public last year the Commissioner ran a survey on his website asking members of the public who have called 101 to complete a short online questionnaire. The results of the survey enabled the Commissioner to hear more from members of the public who had concerns regarding 101. Over 40 submissions were received, the majority of whom were dissatisfied with the 101 service they had received.

5. CALL HANDLING

5.1 Emergency 999 calls are the Constabulary's highest priority. These calls are received within the Constabulary's Force Control Room where each is assessed swiftly and efficiently with the operator determining the most appropriate way to deal with it.

5.2 Non-emergency 101 calls are received within the Constabulary's Police Service Centre. Despite being the non-emergency number, some calls are received via 101 that are emergency calls, for instance when there is a crime in progress. It is therefore vital that once the call is initially answered that an assessment takes place to ascertain the nature of the call, the vulnerability of the caller and the urgency of further action. This is most accurately described as initial triage. 101 call handling is considered a front line policing service, and for this reason call handlers play a crucial role in keeping people safe and fulfilling good service expectations.

5.3 Should there be a need for immediate action then the 101 call can be treated in the same way as a 999 call - an incident is created and the Force Control Room will then despatch the appropriate resource. Of the remaining non-urgent calls, approximately 50% are requests to be put through to departments or officers. The remaining 50% are transferred within the Police Service Centre to staff who can spend time with the caller to take all the necessary details, provide support, advice and guidance, recording a crime or incident report as necessary. All of which can take considerable time, hence this is carried out after the initial triaging. The process of transferring the call within the Police Service Centre after triage is termed "secondary call handling".

6. PERFORMANCE

6.1 The Constabulary's 999 call handling performance remains strong, approximately 28,500 calls were received per month in the 12 months to April 2015, of which nearly 94% (around 24,700) are answered within 10 seconds or less.

6.2 Supervision and governance is in place to ensure that the delicacies of managing the demand are met and this is evidenced in the continual 999 performance that the Constabulary maintains.

6.3 The Constabulary recently undertook a seven day survey of 999 call's which revealed that approximately 40% were non-emergency matters, and in fact were calls that should have been directed towards the 101 service. Call handlers are encouraged to "do the right thing" –they can be flexible and make decisions that allow the provision of a service without impacting negatively on the emergency 999 lines. In circumstances where a 999 call is a non-emergency call and no other 999 calls are waiting, operators are empowered to deal with the member of the public as effectively and efficiently as they felt possible, not simply divert them away towards a further call to 101.

6.4 In the 12 months to April 2015, the Constabulary received over 345,950 calls to 101; an average of approximately 28,800 per month. During this period, 94% of calls were answered in 30 seconds, with an average pick up time of five to eight seconds. In the six months ending April 2015, the average wait time was between six to eight seconds. Around half the calls were dealt with immediately. However, half needed to be transferred to another member of staff and in these cases there could be a delay during busy periods.

6.5 The website Police.uk publishes all police force data on call 101 handling. When compared

with other police forces with similar call volumes, the Constabulary had the quickest call answering response times for the period between April and December 2014. The Constabulary's call abandonment rates were within the ten lowest out of all police forces for the same period.

- 6.6 Most secondary 101 calls are dealt with quickly and efficiently with an average wait time of four minutes four seconds over the 12 months to April 2015. However, some callers have had to wait considerably longer, with the average longest wait time for that period being around 46 minutes. An average of 16% were abandoned after 30 seconds. These delays within the 101 service remains one of the most common complaints received by the Commissioner.
- 6.7 Tables are attached for call performance from May 2014 to April 2015 at Appendix 1.
- 6.8 It is clear to see that the slight decline in performance correlates to the previous increases in total call volumes during summer 2014, and again in March and April 2015.
- 6.9 The staff in the Police Service Centre and Force Control Room are working coherently and efficiently. Recent fine adjustments between the two units are assisting in the overall management of demand. The focus is upon ensuring that the processes are as efficient as possible and that the call handling staff are supported, developed and motivated to continue to deliver excellent service ensuring the public receive the best service we can within available resources.

7. INVESTMENT

- 7.1 The overriding priority for the Commissioner and the Constabulary is to keep people safe. With reduced budgets and in anticipation of future reductions, the focus of efforts is on the consideration of vulnerability through assessments of Threat, Risk and Harm. Such an approach applies across policing from the deployment at incidents through to prioritising call handling functions.
- 7.2 Nonetheless, the Commissioner and the Chief Constable are committed to delivering an effective and efficiently 101 service and investment will help meet their obligations to the public and ensure people have a fast and direct route to the Constabulary.
- 7.3 In response to feedback the Commissioner has received from the public regarding their experience of 101, the Commissioner and the Chief Constable agreed to invest over £360,000 to fund additional call handling staff and new technology in order to help the Police Service Centre better cope with periods of high demand.
- 7.4 10 additional members of staff will be recruited to the Force Control Room at a cost of £300,000. The recruitment exercise is currently underway. Being a 101 call handler is a highly skilled job and it takes time to properly train the operatives. Consequently, it will take several months to feel the true benefit of the new staff coming through.
- 7.5 This investment in new technology will build on the £60,000 already invested in the new Interactive Voice Response system and the Queuebuster System currently being tested, with deployment time estimated by mid-July 2015. The Queuebuster System will give callers the option of a ring back whilst retaining their place in the queue.
- 7.6 The Interactive Voice Response system is approaching the end of testing and will be an upgrade to the current model, allowing callers to be routed to their required destination in a more timely and efficient manner. It will include improved options to route calls direct to officers, reducing demand on 101 staff.

8. COLLABORATION – PUBLIC CONTENT MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 There is already significant collaboration across a range of functions between the Constabulary, and the constabularies of Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. Further proposals for a collaborated "public contact" function that includes 101 call handling are being considered. At this stage the proposals are considering how the Constabulary can maximise the opportunities that technology offers for the public to choose how to make

contact to report incidents and crimes and to speak directly to officers.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The Constabulary has put a lot of time into exploring the various options for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Police Service Centre. Through a combination of more staff and new technology, the investment will enable the Commissioner and the Constabulary to better meet the public's expectations when using the 101 service.
- 9.2 Other work remains ongoing to assist with the potential of demand reduction, such as Webchat, Self-Service, Online reporting, to ensure that as soon as the solutions are fit to be deployed they are done so expediently.
- 9.3 The Commissioner will continue to be listen to the public feedback he receives regarding the 101 call handling service. Consequently, the Commissioner will continue to call for reports to his Board in order to fulfil his statutory duty to hold the Chief Constable to account for the Constabulary's call handling performance and monitor the impact of the above plans closely.

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Call Handling Updates, Business Coordination Board meetings – November 2013, May 2014, August 2014, October 2014, June 2015 and included in some Operational Update reports <http://www.cambridgeshire-pcc.gov.uk/>

'101 Call Handling', Police and Crime Panel report, November 2014
<http://democracy.peterborough.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=543&MId=3393&Ver=4>

<http://www.police.uk/>

CAMBRIDGESHIRE CONSTABULARY CALL HANDLING PERFORMANCE APRIL 2014 – APRIL 2015

	<u>May 2014</u>	<u>June 2014</u>	<u>July 2014</u>	<u>August 2014</u>	<u>Sept 2014</u>	<u>Oct 2014</u>	<u>Nov 2014</u>	<u>Dec 2014</u>	<u>Jan 2015</u>	<u>Feb 2015</u>	<u>March 2015</u>	<u>April 2015</u>
999 Emergency Call Handling Performance												
Call Volume	9090	8980	10215	9308	8413	9257	8761	8335	7423	7140	8137	8024
% answered in 10 seconds	96.05	96.01	93.44	93.41	93.78	93.30	94.92	94.28	96.79	95.52	95.61	96.19
101 Non- Emergency Calls												
Call Volume	29753	31336	33400	29303	30331	30010	27836	25466	25614	25766	28976	28159
% answered in 30 seconds	94.25	91.35	92.5	94.82	93.71	94.91	95.52	95.68	95.79	93.5	92.85	92.58
Secondary Call Handling												
% Abandoned after 30 seconds	16.74	19.79	21.27	16.68	16.47	13.49	12.39	10.81	10.53	13.96	18.39	22.36
Average Wait Time	3:47	4:34	5:10	3:31	3:25	3:16	3:36	3:40	2:40	3:53	4:52	6:31
Longest Wait Time	54:54	52:12	54:29	39:27	59:18	56:42	47:38	41:25	45:42	49:31	49:00	58:05

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