

CAMBRIDGESHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL	Agenda Item No. 9
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Report of Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Commissioner

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HATE CRIME

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to make the Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Panel (the “Panel”) aware of how the Police and Crime Commissioner (the “Commissioner”) and Cambridgeshire Constabulary’s (the “Constabulary”) for dealing with the hate crimes and incidents.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 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 Police and Crime Commissioner in connection with the discharge of the Commissioner’s functions.

Item 8 – To support the effective exercise of the functions of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

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 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 and therefore cannot interfere with operational policing matters.

- 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.

5. HATE CRIME

- 5.1 The Commissioner and the Chief Constable share the same commitment regarding hate crime: ensuring that it is taken seriously and responded to. The Commissioner’s commitment to tackling hate crime is a priority action within his draft Police and Crime Plan, making it clear that increasing community understanding of vulnerability and issues, such as hate crime, and the support available.

- 5.2 A hate incident is one where the victim or anyone else think it was motivated by hostility or prejudice based on one of the following five strands: disability; race; religion; transgender identity; and sexual orientation. All police forces record hate incidents as a hate crime based on these five personal characteristics. Incidents which are based on other personal characteristics, such as age and belonging to an alternative sub-culture, are not considered to be hate crimes under the law. These incidents can still be reported but they will not be prosecuted specifically as hate crimes by the police and the Crown Prosecution Service. Hate crime can take many forms including physical assault, damage to property, offensive graffiti, verbal abuse, offensive leaflets, and or bullying at home on-line, in schools or in public areas.
- 5.3 As with most forces in the country, the Constabulary saw an increase in reports of hate crime post EU Referendum. However, this may not have been the only influence on the reporting of hate crime, given that recent international terrorist attacks may have also increased feelings of vulnerability leading to higher reporting levels. This and given that police forces are investigating allegations very robustly, is likely to impact on the numbers of recorded crime.
- 5.4 Home Office data shows that Police recorded hate crime in England and Wales for 2015/16 (April 2015 to March 2016) was 62,518, an increase of over 10,000 or 19% compared to the same period in 2014/15. Of the five strands (as referred to above), the race strand increased by over 6,500 (15%), with religious hate crime increasing by 35% (up 1,107 to 4,400 offences).
- 5.5 In Cambridgeshire, when comparing the 2014/15 period with 2015/16, the Constabulary has seen a 17.8% increase in recorded hate crime, of 91 incidents, a total of 602. In May 2016, the Constabulary recorded 79 incidents of hate crimes, 92 incidents in June (16.5% increase since May), compared with 107 incidents recorded in July (16.3% increase from June) and 70 incidents in August 2016 (11.4% reduction from May). On average hate crime has risen by 14% between May and September 2016.
- 5.6 Flags are added to all crimes and incidents where hate has been a factor. This enables the Constabulary to accurately record the types of hate crime occurring in our communities and allows the Constabulary to deploy resources and employ interventions accordingly. Furthermore, it ensures the Constabulary are able to feed into the national picture around offending.
- 5.7 Nationally, the Home Office are unable to provide statistics on the prevalence of online hate crime as this is something that is relatively new to the way in which crime is recorded by the police. The Home Office is currently working with police forces to improve the consistency and quality of the data, and to determine when it will be ready for publication.

6. RESPONDING TO HATE CRIME IN COMMUNITIES

- 6.1 Tackling and responding to hate crime requires a partnership approach between Government, criminal justice agencies, including the police service, courts, and community groups representing those affected by hate crime.
- 6.2 Locally, engagement events such as the multi-cultural community event which was hosted by the Constabulary in September 2016 to recognise the work already happening in communities across Cambridgeshire and to reaffirm the importance of cohesion and joint working. Around 180 people from across the community, including religious leaders, community groups and partner agencies attended the event, where several guest speakers talked about the community and multiculturalism meant to them. Such events promote community led solutions.

7. IMPROVING AWARENESS OF HATE CRIME AND THIRD PARTY REPORTING

- 7.1 The Commissioner is clear that local policing starts with understanding of local concerns being listened to. Communication and engagement with the public, communities and partners, is therefore essential to ensure the needs and concerns of the people of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are listened to.

- 7.2 During National Hate Crime Awareness Week (8th – 15th October 2016), the Commissioner, the Deputy Commissioner and the Constabulary hosted seven contact points around the county to interact with members of the public. This provided an opportunity to inform the public on what hate crime is and how to report it. These members of the public were also asked to undertake a short survey regarding their understanding of hate crime, whether they had been a victim or know someone who had been a victim, and if they knew how report a hate crime. The results of survey will enable both the Commissioner and the Constabulary to see both a snapshot of how many people have experienced or have been a victim of hate crime and the situation as a whole.
- 7.3 Both the Commissioner and the Constabulary proactively encourage victims of hate crime to report incidents without fear, and be confident that they will be taken seriously and treated sensitively. As a consequence, there may be an increase in the number of recorded crimes but this should not be seen as a negative indicator.
- 7.4 The Commissioner is also very supportive of the third party reporting opportunities, such as True Vision, which gives information about hate crime or incidents and how to report it, and the Citizens Advice where victims or witnesses of hate crime can report the incident and Citizens Advice will then report it to the police.

8. SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS AND WITNESSES OF HATE CRIME

- 8.1 The Commissioner recently launched the Constabulary's Victims and Witness Hub, which merged victim and witness services so that anyone affected by crime has access to a single, streamlined service. The Hub provides an 'end to end' practical and emotional support service for all victims and witnesses of crime from the point of reporting and through any criminal justice process including giving evidence at court. Encouraging victims and witnesses to report a hate crime incident, supporting them and keeping them informed of progress and the outcome, should ensure that they and the wider community are confident that the Constabulary are dealing effectively with hate crime.
- 8.2 Victim satisfaction with the overall service received from the Constabulary has remained stable in recent months (86%), although there has been a downward trend in satisfaction for victims of hate crime. The Constabulary's response to this is currently being considered.
- 8.3 The Commissioner and the Chief Constable are supportive of the use of Restorative Justice, where a victim of any crime, including hate crime, is able to meet, at any point in the legal process, to talk about the harm that has been caused and to find a way to repair that harm.

9. BUILDING THE UNDERSTANDING OF HATE CRIME

- 9.1 Both nationally and locally there is a recognition that in order to tackle hate crime, there needs to be an understanding of the scale and nature of the problem. Crime data analysis is one method, along with continual engagement with the public, communities, representative groups, and partners, to improve understanding of the offender motivation, causes and effects of hate crime. The Home Office is currently working on building this picture nationally, as part of the Government's 'Action Against Hate' plan for tackling hate crime.
- 9.2 The Constabulary's current Hate Crime Strategy is being reviewed to align tackling hate crime to national objectives for prevention, responding to hate crime in communities, increasing reporting, improving support, and building understanding, in line with the Home Office Action Plan.

10. HOLDING TO ACCOUNT

- 10.1 In terms of how the Commissioner is monitoring and gaining assurance as to how the Constabulary are responding to hate crime, the Commissioner has weekly 1:1 meetings with the Chief Constable, where the Commissioner is able to feedback observations from his engagement and discuss progress on this priority. In addition, the Commissioner's Business Coordination board, Performance Working Group, and the work his officers do with the Constabulary, enable the Commissioner to both scrutinise and support the Constabulary in how they respond to crime, including hate crime.

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

'Action Against Hate – The UK Government's plan for tackling hate crime', Home Office, July 2016

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hate-crime-action-plan-2016>