



To: Business Coordination Board

From: Acting Chief Executive

Date: 26 May 2020

OPCC BUSINESS RESPONSE TO COVID-19

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Business Coordination Board (“the Board”) of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) response to the Covid-19 emergency in respect of its statutory roles and responsibilities.
- 1.2 This report is an update of activity since the report to the April 2020 Board meeting. The April Board report provides background information, which the Board are asked to refer to if needed.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 The Board is recommended to note the report.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Covid-19 situation means that business cannot be as usual. In order to respond to the emergency and fulfil statutory responsibilities, the Acting Police and Crime Commissioner (the “Acting Commissioner”) the OPCC, and Cambridgeshire Constabulary (the “Constabulary”) has to work differently within each of their statutory powers and remit.
- 3.2 As an Acting Commissioner can exercise all the powers that elected Police and Crime Commissioners have apart from varying or issuing a Police and Crime Plan (the “Plan”) (as provided for in the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011). The Acting Commissioner had already determined that the priorities of the Plan should remain for the coming period. Now that his term has been extended to 2021 he reaffirms them. The delivery of the Plan remains steady but the Covid-19 crisis magnifies the need to drive forward the objectives and activities relevant to the needs in response to the crisis in Cambridgeshire. He will continue to put support for victims centre stage

ensure offenders are brought to justice and deterred from reoffending. He will also continue to issue crime and disorder grants in the context of the current Plan.

4. OPCC response

4.1 The Acting Commissioner continues to be in regular contact with Chief Constable and the OPCC receive information from daily operational calls and countywide partnership calls. The Acting Commissioner, along with other Police and Crime Commissioners, has regular conference calls, arranged by the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, with appropriate government Ministers.

4.2 The OPCC has demonstrated that it has moulded and flexed itself with its input and actions at the right pace and right time within the framework of the Plan in response to the Covid-19 crisis (as given in the April Board report).

- Chief Executive, as a trained clinician, has been seconded to Public Health England for six months as Interim Deputy Regional Director and NHS Regional Director of Public Health for the East of England, to use her skills and experience where they are most needed during this crisis. An Acting Chief Executive is now in place, from existing staff, to cover the secondment period.
- Redeployment of a member of staff to the Special Constabulary.
- The Communications Manager engaged early and inputted heavily with countywide and partnership work i.e. the ‘warning and informing’ cell of the Local Resilience Forum (LRF).
- The OPCC lead for work on Offenders continues to provide leadership and support into interagency groups regarding the resettlement of people leaving prison within the Covid context. Strong links built with public health colleagues to ensure current guidance can be adhered to.
- The OPCC Victims Lead worked flexibly and pro-actively supporting victim service providers to redesign their services holding weekly supportive informal contract meetings.
- Criminal justice system (CJS) – extra-ordinary CJ meetings have been called to identify the risks the crisis has created within the system, mitigate these locally where possible and escalate those where a national solution is needed.

5. Victims Support Services

5.1 The OPCC directly commissions a range of victim support services and supports the partnership working arrangements for domestic abuse services with the local authority. Since the start of the pandemic, services have been supported to move from face-to-face to telephone-based, online or virtual services. Contingency plans have been developed for each service to ensure victims continue to be able to access

support. As the lockdown eases work now moves to reviewing these arrangements and supporting plans to re-introduce socially distanced face to face support.

- 5.2 A number of new pathways of support had been created as services embrace different ways of working. For example, the Bobby Scheme which provides target hardening for elderly victims of burglary, has had to pause all home visits. Staff in the Victim and Witness Hub have been contacting all these victims and offering emotional support in the intervening period. The OPCC is now supporting the charity's plans to re-open in some form.
- 5.3 The existing strong partnership working arrangements have ensured a seamless provision throughout the pandemic to date. The OPCC has continued to liaise with all providers on a regular basis and feed any emerging issues or risks to the Constabulary's Multi Agency Incident Cell. The Ministry of Justice has increased the data requirements from all agencies during lockdown and the OPCC has been providing this information which is hoped will support their plans to reimburse providers who have incurred unplanned for costs. The OPCC continues to join weekly calls with central government feeding in local issues.
- 5.4 Some staff across the system have found working from home and providing emotional support to often highly anxious and traumatised victims a challenge. The OPCC worked with a clinical psychologist to develop hour-long virtual training and support sessions for staff initially in the Victim and Witness Hub. These sessions reinforced their knowledge on trauma-informed practice but also enabled them to deal with their own welfare and put coping mechanisms in place. The feedback has been amazing with staff appreciating the investment in them professionally and personally. The training is now being rolled out to the Independent Sexual Violence Adviser service.
- 5.5 Referrals into services remain steady and reflective of local crime trends. However, providers are reporting an increasing complexity of cases and planning for a potential surge when the lockdown ends.

6. Criminal Justice System (CJS) governance

- 6.1 Through the Acting Commissioner's role to ensure an efficient and effective criminal justice system, staff from within the OPCC have provided additional support to this agenda supporting the Senior Policy Manager for CJS who is seconded from the Constabulary to the OPCC.
- 6.2 The existing Criminal Justice Board governance structure has been developed into an operational Gold/Silver command meeting structure in order to understand the emerging risks within the criminal justice system. Partners are meeting on a weekly basis to ensure that they remain abreast of each respective agencies' position and challenges. A collaborative approach has been taken to ensure justice continues to be delivered during these challenging times, albeit on a reduced basis.
- 6.3 One of the biggest challenges has been listing/hearing cases in court, both for Magistrates and Crown Court. Due to the crisis period HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) are leading a national response, with the formation of a national Recovery Plan. Local HMCTS representatives have been engaging with partners throughout in terms of what that plan means for us locally.

- 6.4 The Magistrates Court 'stood down' all non-urgent work at the start of the crisis and prioritised urgent cases, such as remands, bail applications and warrants. Priority trials have since recommenced, combining physical and virtual court means to enable these trials to recommence. Initial findings are positive.
- 6.5 The Crown Court has adjourned all cases involving a jury. The Court has continued to deal with urgent work where necessary. Nationally it has been announced that jury trials are to be resumed from w.c. 18th May 2020 and discussions are taking place with the local Resident Judge as to when jury trials will be resuming within Cambridgeshire.
- 6.6 Discussions are ongoing in respect of the backlog for Magistrates and Crown. Prior to Covid-19 there was already a backlog of trials waiting to be heard in the Crown Court and this is something that needs to be considered as part of the recovery planning phase.
- 6.7 The Senior Policy Manager is also linked in with the Tactical Coordinating Group in terms of recovery planning with the CJ 'Gold' group reporting into that group going forward.

7. Offenders

- 7.1 Through a range of partnership governance mechanisms across the county, and some grants, the OPCC facilitates and supports collaborative working relating to crime prevention and reducing reoffending. The OPCC has liaised with key partners on a regular basis to ensure emerging partnership issues or risks are addressed, and that opportunities for collaborative working are identified.
- 7.2 The Government announced the need, following appropriate risk assessment, for the early release of some prisoners in order to help manage the current health crisis. Alongside these exceptional releases, of course, those due to be released during this period as 'business as usual' will continue to be released. This is in the context of challenges for those services providing support to these individuals given the need for social distancing and pressures on services such as temporary accommodation.
- 7.3 Supporting the prison and probation leads on these releases, the OPCC has facilitated a broad-based partnership group. This is enabling partners to undertake joint planning for the safe release and resettlement of prisoners to help manage Covid-19, with appropriate escalation mechanisms through Local Resilience Forum Structures. This workstream is also linking with the wider work to map the response for those groups that can experience exclusion.
- 7.4 Early prison releases have not yet been required on the scale initially envisaged by the government. This should enable partners to focus on supporting the needs of business as usual releases, and how they operate during the next phase when contact tracing becomes the focus. The OPCC continues to support sharing of information and practical problem solving between a very broad range of partners. This will continue through the recovery phase, including facilitating work to ensure that new, more flexible ways of inter-agency working during Covid, can continue where this adds value.

8. Communities

- 8.1 The Acting Commissioner has continued to support the joining up of service provision to listen and respond to day to day community safety issues during the Covid-19 crisis. He remains in regular contact with the Chief Constable as to the Constabulary's response to policing the lockdown restrictions.
- 8.2 Members of the community are being directed to the Government website for information on guidance on the current 'stay alert' restrictions and are able to report breaches on the force website, where there is additional information.
- 8.3 The Commissioner's Communications Manager continues to support countywide communications colleagues on the 'warning and informing' communications cell of the LRF to ensure communities have access to appropriate and timely messaging during the pandemic.
- 8.4 Campaign messages delivered and shared through the cell include regular updates on community safety messages such as advice about current scams, further support of NHS and Public Health England messaging on the regular washing of hands and the 'stay alert' measures and support offered through the countywide and district Community Hubs. The OPCC also led a public campaign, 'Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Against Coronavirus' advising communities how they can volunteer locally to support vulnerable neighbours during the lockdown.
- 8.5 A social media campaign reminding victims of crime that support services continue to run throughout the health emergency was also launched with updates on specialist support services, e.g. for victims of rape and sexual violence, migrant victims of exploitation and potential victims of modern slavery.
- 8.6 This information is shared through each of the Communications cell members' networks for example, Neighbourhood Watch and through the Acting Commissioner's Ecos distribution list.
- 8.7 MPs and leaders are regularly updated with current communications priorities through a regular weekly call with the LRF Chairs.

9. Transformation

- 9.1 Although it is still too early to give any real indication, it is possible that there may be some attrition on the Constabulary's budgetary revenue position as a result of responding to the Covid-19 crisis. However, future finance reports to the Board meeting, along with the Outturn report, will incorporate any additional costs that may be incurred as a result of dealing with the crisis.
- 9.2 The Annual Statement of Accounts deadlines have been delayed nationally. However, year-end procedures are ongoing and the OPCC is working with both internal and external auditors, both to complete 2019/20 financial year requirements as thoroughly as can in the circumstances.
- 9.3 The joint Constabulary and OPCC Resource Group continues to operate looking at strategic issues, risks and business planning.

10.0 Recommendation

10.1 The Board is recommended to note the report.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Source Documents	Police and Crime Plan 2017-20 Community Safety and Criminal Justice Cambridgeshire and Peterborough https://cambridgeshire-pcc.gov.uk/Police-and-Crime-Plan-Aug-2019 'OPCC Response to Covid-19', Agenda Item 6.0, Business Co-ordination Report, 30 th April 2020 https://www.cambridgeshire-pcc.gov.uk/accessing-information/decision-making/business-coordination-board/bcb-30th-april-2020/
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