

Police and Crime Commissioner for Greater Manchester

Report on the Police and Crime Plan

ROCHDALE

November 2013

Introduction

Following a period of consultation with the public and partners, I published my Police and Crime Plan 2013-16 in March this year. I launched the consultation on the draft Police and Crime Plan at the Town Hall in Rochdale on 31st January 2013. The event was attended by Councillor Colin Lambert, Superintendent Chris Hankinson along with invitees from Homewatch Schemes, community groups, Rochdale Council plus members of the public.

The Plan is built around nine police and crime objectives, all of which have partnership working at their heart. This report provides local councillors with an update on key work I have been leading since taking up post and is accompanied by a report from the Chief Constable to me, presenting an update on performance to date, describing activity that Greater Manchester Police are taking forward with partners to deliver against the objectives and tackle emerging threats.

Police and Crime Steering Group

Over the past few months I have met individually with each Steering Group member to discuss how the Group might usefully develop and focus its work. The result has been the development of an agreed approach to joint working, with a clear emphasis on delivery, and the identification of a number of common themes around which constructive policy work might take place across Greater Manchester. The issues identified to date include domestic abuse, travellers, charging for police services and transforming justice. The list is necessarily flexible in order that any emerging themes can be incorporated into the Group's work programme. Your views on any issues that the Group might examine in future would be welcome.

I have regular meetings with Councillor Colin Lambert as leader of Rochdale Council and Chair of the Police and Crime Steering Group, and Jim Taylor, Chief Executive. These meetings have considered key issues including child sexual exploitation and the response through the multi-agency Sunrise team, anti-social behaviour and large scale operations such as dealing with the English Defence League demonstration. I regularly receive and respond to emails from local councillors.

Meeting and involving members of the public

Since taking up post, I have spent much of my time speaking and liaising with members of the public in Greater Manchester. As well as attending meetings of established groups such as Homewatch schemes and events organised by faith communities and young people's groups, there are a number of opportunities to examine key policing and crime themes in public. Each month I have held a public meeting in one of the ten local authority areas. These meetings have provided members of the public with an opportunity to quiz the Chief Constable, local divisional commander and myself on a wide range of issues.

The public meeting in Rochdale took place on 18th June 2013 at the Town Hall. This meeting was attended by more than 50 members of the public. Following inputs from me, the Chief Constable and Divisional Commander, issues discussed included arrangements for neighbourhood policing, reductions in crime, the challenges presented by the budget cuts, working in partnership to tackle the causes of crime, Homewatch, police buildings, increasing the diversity of the GMP workforce and the 101 non-emergency phone number.

Other local meetings I have attended include the “A Question of Faith” event organised by Rochdale Multi-Faith Partnership on 6th June 2013 at the Castlemere Community Centre and the Rochdale Diversity Awards on 5th July 2013. With Rochdale Safer Communities Partnership, I jointly sponsored and presented the Cohesion Award.

As well as attending local meetings and liaising with local groups and communities, I hold two public forum meetings every month. One of the meetings is used to consider issues of strategic importance and make key decisions in public. The other is used to take an in-depth look at an issue of significant public interest. This is done in a way that is similar to the select committee system in Parliament, calling on experts from police, partner agencies and other relevant organisations to give their insight and expertise to inform the development of recommendations which focus on improvements in services for the public. Topics examined so far include fraud, professional standards and, this month I chaired a session focusing on improving service provision for victims of domestic abuse. After I extended the Chief Constable’s appointment for three years, a forum was held where Sir Peter Fahy outlined his vision for GMP until 2016 and was then questioned by a panel comprising political, community and media representatives. The issues and themes emerging from my forums are communicated to the wider public through traditional, online and social media.

Domestic abuse

Over the past year I have undertaken considerable consultation with both victims of domestic abuse and those agencies who deal with individuals who experience domestic abuse. This work has helped inform my understanding of both the services that are currently provided and the services that people actually want and need. The outcomes from this consultation will help inform my plans for commissioning these services in the future. What I have learned is that services need to be better designed to account for the needs of the whole family, including the perpetrators of domestic abuse, rather than focussing solely on the victim. Although there is rightly a place for very specific victim services, and we have some fantastic services working very hard in relation to this, I have found some excellent examples of holistic family programmes that, not only help families to address domestic abuse but also provide support with other needs such as those relating to substance misuse, mental health, employment and housing. Clearly where services are pooling their resources this can provide opportunities for more joined up working and this is something I know you will join me in continuing to encourage.

Although some victims have told us that they don’t always want to go down the criminal justice route, this is certainly one option and we need to better use all the tools at our disposal to help support people experiencing this terrible crime. New powers such as Domestic Violence Protection Orders and the Clare’s Law legislation have been employed, and we have some excellent examples of where this has been effective. I have asked Greater Manchester Police and other partners to look at their use of DVPOs to ensure that this power is being maximised across Greater Manchester as we have clear evidence that it is an effective tool. Over the summer I supported a publicity campaign to encourage greater use of Clare’s Law and heard from potential victims who had used the power to escape what could have been abusive relationships.

Domestic Violence Homicide reviews are one way of encouraging lessons to be shared and I asked GMP to convene a regional workshop to help us do just this. Clearly there is a great deal of learning out there, which, without talking to partners outside Greater

Manchester, we would fail to capture. Effective regional working is vital if we are to develop services and practices to truly make a difference to victims of domestic abuse.

I wanted November 2013 to mark a month of activity focusing specifically on domestic abuse and the improvement of services for victims. As well as publicising local statistics on its incidence and distributing publicity material signposting victims to sources of help, I have asked for a motion to be debated at council meetings during the month. The motion focuses on a commitment to make a stand and work together against domestic abuse, whilst doing all we can to encourage people to report domestic abuse to the police. I also convened a number of evidence-gathering sessions with victims and support agencies which were well-attended and generated much useful information about potential improvements to services. The culmination of these activities was a public forum session in Manchester on 25th November, at which representatives from GMP, the Crown Prosecution Service and Courts were subject to scrutiny and challenge on the services they provide to domestic abuse victims. The evidence gathered will help shape the content of a Domestic Abuse Charter. I ask you all to sign up today to work with me and other partners to end Domestic Abuse and produce a Charter in the new year.

St Mary's Sexual Assault Referral Centre

This year, an element of my budget was used to fund the St Mary's Sexual Assault Referral Centre. This service provides forensic and psychological support to both adults and children in the aftermath of sexual abuse and rape. I also provided some extra funding this year to enable the service to provide support to people seeking help for historic abuse; in the aftermath of the Jimmy Savile and Chetham's investigations. In particular, this element of the funding has been used to support those victims who wish to pursue a court case in relation to their abuse.

In the future there will be changes to the commissioning arrangements for St Mary's and, from 2015 this will no longer be my responsibility. Obviously I want to ensure that this transition is as smooth as possible without compromising the service that people in Greater Manchester receive. As such, I have asked that my Office chairs a small group to oversee these transition arrangements. This means that, before a handover takes place, we will be able to ensure that the quality of service required is reflected in the agreement that is made, with both the Centre itself and the new NHS commissioners.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Child sexual exploitation is an issue that has shocked the nation over the course of the past two years and when I came into office, I was determined to do what I could to ensure that we address this issue from every angle including early intervention, prevention, education and disruption. In January this year I convened a CSE Summit which brought together the local child safeguarding leads, along with their respective directors of children's services to share best practice and ensure that the issue has a suitably high profile within local authority plans. I was impressed to hear about some of the work being undertaken and about the level of priority that the issue was being given locally. Since that Summit, I have maintained discussions with partners to ensure I have a good understanding of the problem and recently I wrote to the Minister of State for Crime Prevention asking him to consider strengthening the provisions within the Anti Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill relating to the licensing of unregulated properties and businesses, some of which appear to be "housing" child sexual exploitation and other illicit activity with minors. I will be holding a second summit next

year to gauge progress.

CSE is an issue which frequently appears in the media and I want us to continue to work together and with other partner agencies. One example of good practice that has been undertaken by GMP is their work around building better relationships with children's care homes. I reported my concerns relating to young people going missing from care homes to the Chief Constable in May this year and at that meeting I was assured that there was work being undertaken to address this issue. Positive outcomes from this work include a reduction in the numbers of referrals to the Police by care homes, avoiding the criminalisation of some young people and saving police time, due to reductions in the call outs to low level, often non criminal, incidents.

Working with criminal justice partners to improve the experience of victims

I believe that Police and Crime Commissioners are uniquely placed to take a strategic view across both the criminal justice system and the community safety agenda. We can bring partner agencies together and cast a collective critical eye over the service provided to victims. To that end I have held round table sessions with senior representatives from criminal justice agencies on a number of occasions, discussing ways to improve the experiences of victims and explore how agencies might usefully pool resources to deliver better, more efficient services.

Information from these sessions along with outputs from extensive consultation with victims and their advocates, plus good practice gathered from elsewhere, are being analysed with a view to developing and consulting on a local code of practice, to sit alongside the national victims' code. I want the code to give victims in Greater Manchester a clear understanding of what they can expect throughout their entire journey through the criminal justice system. The local code will also help to inform the commissioning of services to support victims, responsibility for which transfers to Police and Crime Commissioners from October 2014.

Public Service Reform

The delivery of the Greater Manchester approach to the government's Community Budgets initiative is one of my key priorities. I chair the newly established Justice and Rehabilitation Executive Board which brings together key decision makers in the local criminal justice system. The Board has agreed a co-commissioning approach to allow joint decision making on how improvements can be achieved by focussing on the principles of early intervention and prevention.

The Board is responsible for allocation of the Ministry of Justice Financial Incentive Model monies and has recently agreed to roll out a Greater Manchester approach to Intensive Community Orders, using these funds. This approach will see young men aged 18 to 25, who receive custodial sentences of less than 12 months duration, potentially receiving a community-based intervention that aims to help support their rehabilitation and reduce the harm that 'revolving door' offenders can cause to local communities.

With the Executive Board, I have taken responsibility for co-ordinating a Greater Manchester response to the government's plans on Transforming Rehabilitation whereby local probation services will be split into a National Probation Service and a 'privatised' Community Rehabilitation Company by 2015. By ensuring the continuation of partnership ambitions and approaches which strive for the delivery of a just, fair and

rehabilitative local criminal justice system, any disruption to local services will be minimised.

Community Safety Funding

The community safety funding allocations I have awarded for 2013-14 amount to £6.8 million. As you will be aware, the vast majority of this funding has been allocated to local authorities to finance community safety activity.

I have also made a number of grants to different projects focused on helping people with specific needs across Greater Manchester. The grants include £70,000 to St Mary's Sexual Assault Referral Centre to fund support workers for victims of historic sexual abuse. £211,433 has been provided to Big Life/Positive Alternatives to finance mentoring services focused on tackling the mental health and wellbeing problems of people at risk or currently or involved in crime, along with diversionary work to help keep vulnerable young people and adults out of prison and away from criminal activity.

As part of the End the Fear domestic abuse campaign, I have awarded £30,000 to the Independent Choices telephone helpline for people looking for help, referrals and advice on domestic abuse services. A grant of £181,719 to Victim Support has funded five domestic abuse support workers to work across Greater Manchester, focusing on early intervention and prevention, linking in with health services such as accident and emergency and maternity provision. A further £9,000 has helped to extend the provision of qualified volunteer counselling services for victims of crime across Greater Manchester.

The Village area of Manchester city centre is visited by people from across Greater Manchester and further afield. The Village Angels Project established by the Lesbian and Gay Foundation has benefitted from a grant of £65,000 to finance a volunteer support scheme on Fridays and Saturdays and provision of a place of safety for vulnerable people.

Following cuts in government funding, I have granted £91,000 to the Integrated Gang Management Unit to tackle gangs by targeting criminals and working with offenders and £1,625,000 to finance mandatory drug testing of people in custody. I have made a £3,000 to the national 'Ugly Mugs' database which focuses on protecting sex workers by sharing information on violent clients and known criminals, making it easier for victims to report attacks and help the police identify offenders.

Mental health

Through the continued provision of our volunteer appropriate adult service which supports many vulnerable adults whilst in police custody, I am only too aware of the impact that mental ill health can have on people's lives. I recently held a 'call to evidence' session asking partners for examples of 'what works' and to discuss new ideas. This was a very positive session and has kick-started discussions on alternatives to the use of custody suites as places of safety for people presenting with mental health issues. As well as the funding for diversionary activities and counselling support outlined earlier, I have also provided Greater Manchester Police with additional finance for a pilot project in Oldham. This project will focus on agencies sharing information in relation to vulnerable people with mental health problems, helping police officers and staff to make better informed decisions and ensure that the individual concerned receives appropriate intervention.

Drugs and alcohol

Over the course of the past couple of years, there have been a number of changes to the different funding streams that are allocated to support drugs and alcohol services for offenders. I am now responsible for some of this funding and am keen to ensure that the money is spent both wisely and fairly. As such, one of the pieces of work I have undertaken is a review of how the money that I received to support drugs and alcohol services (formerly called the Drugs Intervention Programme, or DIP money) has been spent this year. My representatives have met with officers from each of the Local Authority drug and alcohol action teams to discuss what services this money currently supports, identify where and what gaps exist currently and where there are opportunities to make improvements. These discussions have been extremely useful and it is evident that there are some excellent projects across Greater Manchester that currently support offenders who may have substance misuse problems which are impacting on their offending behaviour. Clearly, what is really important is that we capture positive outcomes and successes and identify any gaps in service provision and consider these when we are deciding what services to commission in the future. These conversations will enable me to do exactly that and I hope to be able to report back to you next year, outlining what services I did commission and what difference these have made in Greater Manchester.

Of course, key to this work is positive partnership relationships - the money I receive to support the drugs and alcohol work is only a small proportion of the overall funding that is received and if we are to make the best use of the money that is available to us, I need to ensure that I am involving both health and voluntary sector partners in the discussions. With this in mind, I hope to convene a call to evidence to discuss drugs and alcohol services, and through this I hope we can identify our mutual priorities for the commissioning of services.

Independent assurance

Soon after taking up post I established an independent Audit and Accounts Committee with a strong and focused scrutiny remit. Committee members meet regularly and consider the work undertaken by the Internal Audit function, bringing any areas of concern to my attention. The Committee also reviews the annual Statement of Accounts, both at the draft and final audited stage.

The programme of work undertaken by my Internal Audit staff is necessarily flexible, adapting to pick up any emerging areas of concern and focusing on the adequacy and effectiveness of the system of internal controls within the area reviewed. A review of the assurance levels assessed over the past financial year demonstrated that all were classed as 'good' or 'high'.

Ethics and integrity – doing the right thing

Working to promote and ensure the highest standards of integrity in the delivery of policing services to the public of Greater Manchester is of crucial importance to me. Earlier this year at my themed public forum meeting examining professional standards, complaints and conduct issues, I announced plans to form an independent Ethics Committee. This Committee, which will be in place by April 2014, will examine and make recommendations on areas of police work which can impact on the reputation of the service and around which additional guidance and advice would be beneficial.

I am also currently exploring options around the creation of an independent ombudsman function. I anticipate that this function will have a key role in providing an objective view and recommendations around complaints which could be considered as being at the less serious end of the scale.