

**LINCOLNSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL
22 September 2023**

**Item 10 - Delivery of the Police and Crime Plan and a refresh
of the Police and Crime Plan 2021- 2025 Report**

Q1. You may recall at the Panel's February meeting, in expressing concerns at the planned cuts in PCSO numbers from 91 to 50 due to this year's Government grant to Lincolnshire Police being smaller than anticipated, I asked whether this would result in fewer police uniforms on the streets of Lincolnshire. I was told then it was too early to know. May I ask you now, half-way through the financial year, could you please give your view on what impacts the reductions in PCSO numbers are having on Neighbourhood Policing particularly in rural areas across Lincolnshire?

The Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) response – I value PCSO's and they do incredible work, so I'm not here defending the reduction as that is not my role. At the public accountability meeting which we held a couple of days ago, a public question was raised in relation to the influx of funding from the government to tackle Scampton, and whether the Chief Constable would be looking to reverse the changes to the PCSO numbers. The substantive answer can be listened to verbatim, but I would like to challenge the answer to ensure there are no misconceptions.

A cut in the budget led to the change because £2 million pounds of the PCSO budget has been realigned to new roles that the Chief Constable has created. That is an operational choice and I believe he is sufficiently trained and aware of the community's needs to make those kinds of choices.

Choosing to put additional resources into protecting vulnerable children by ensuring the 101 number is answered more promptly is something every community will say is a priority. The Chief Constable has built a new policing model which we discussed at that meeting, and a copy of the strategy is available publicly on the website.

They are still very much supporting the neighbourhood policing model across the entire Country and the PCSO's are being used as effectively as possible. The approach will be kept in discussion and under review in our meetings on behalf of residents, but the effects

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of the changes cannot yet be measured until the model is fully in place following October. I will be engaging with communities to understand that their perception of the model is working, and I will also be looking at the hard data.

It is not entirely down to PCSOs to solve all anti-social behaviour problems; PCSOs were part of the solution and policing is part of the solution. We need to make sure that these problems are talked about in our communities and a change to the PCSO model is no excuse for accepting longer term problems in our communities.

Q2. - In the debate earlier in the year following the announcement of planned cuts to numbers of PCSOs, a number of Panel members were surprised to be informed that there was no substantial difference in the costs of a PCSO compared to that of a warranted police officer. May I ask you - as soon as practical - to provide a breakdown in costs of training, equipping, and supporting both PCSOs and warranted police officers including salary and other costs say over their first five years of service?

The Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) response - I would question whether this would be a matter for the Police and Crime Commissioner, but if that substantially helps your work, we can task someone to obtain the information.

My understanding is that the headline cost when you take on a PC versus a new PC would be an estimated thousand pounds difference. There is a new training model starting in April for police officers, so it will change again under the new non-degree entry route which has been developed by the College of Policing. We will then need to reassess it. Again, that level of detail can certainly be obtained and brought back if it would be of assistance.

Q3. You will recall that a couple of years ago, you invited the seven district councils across Lincolnshire to consider offering a council tax concession-to Special Constables in recognition of their much valued but totally unpaid service which helps keep Lincolnshire a safe low crime place to live and work. South Kesteven's then Cabinet rejected the idea, but lobbying from members of this Panel - ie the late Cllr Ray Wootten, Cllr Sarah Trotter and myself, - persuaded the then Cabinet to change their minds and offer the concession. Would you provide an update on the take-up so far across Lincolnshire including costs of the concession and say

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whether you would consider re-inviting those councils who originally declined to re-consider.

Finally, given the current cuts to PCSO numbers, would you:

- **welcome such a concession being extended to Voluntary PCSOs,**
- **provide an update on current numbers of VPCSOs**
- **give your assessment of the value of VPCSOs**
- **consider inviting councils to assist with training costs of VPCSOs resident in their area and/or encourage VPCSO recruitment by offering a council tax concession to VPCSOs.**

The Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) response - It is incredible that people give up their time to volunteer, whether that is as a warranted Special Constable or as a volunteer in any number of other roles. There are several hundred volunteers in Lincolnshire who give up their time to support their community and they absolutely have my appreciation.

There is something unique about the role of Special Constable as it is the type of role appointed by the Crown and you have warranted powers of arrest. Our training department has been running at absolute maximum for a number of years and with the opening of the new training centre in Skegness, we have been all hands to the pump to train regulars and to bring in new recruits.

A couple of weeks ago we had a cohort of 20 of specials. We have seen the numbers drop because of the success of recruiting them, as you cannot train specials at the same time as regulars. This is where voluntary PCSO's come in again and do a great job.

The challenge is to train the regular police officers, the regular PCSO's and the Special Constables. Officers who have retired as PCSO's sometimes come back as volunteer PCSO's, so they also make a very valuable contribution.

I also value the support of the District Councils who took up the offer of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for Special Constables. I will come back to you on the exact cost, but it will be very minimal. It was disappointing that we did not get all the District Councils on board, but I would welcome them to reconsider given the benefits.

It has potential to really support people giving up their time to patrol the streets, and those in full police uniform keeping the community safe with a very small amount of financial support. I will

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write to them again, but it is a difficult scenario where you want people who volunteer to be paid. While it is great that we have 20 new officers coming in, I would like to see more and any help we can get from council colleagues to do that would be greatly appreciated.

Q4. With town centre businesses under increasing pressure, regarding the recent Co-op shoplifting report, with losses in the millions, how are our priorities going to address this situation?

The Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) response – Considering that half of recorded thefts are actually shoplifting, I think that shoplifting is massively under reported. Some businesses make decisions around the level of tolerance that they will suffer before making a report. It is a simple economic equation between the time spent reporting versus the cost of loss. I would rather that the police forces were put under more pressure by there being more reporting because it would give a more accurate picture of what was going on and enable analysis around problem offenders. This would allow the police to deploy a strategic response to target them.

Through experience sitting on the Business Crime Forum through the National Association and locally, we are setting up our own Business Client Forum for Lincolnshire, with the first meeting expected in November. It is not just focused on retail, but a wider range of aspects that we are bringing together to understand some of the challenges around business crime in Lincolnshire.

In the last few days, I was contacted by advisors in Number 10 and the Home Office, as well as speaking to the CEO of the College of Policing who congratulated us on some of the best practices in Lincolnshire with the use of Criminal Behaviour Orders in Grantham to tackle shop theft.

We are trying to work with prolific offenders and working proactively to keep them out of the area. This has enabled interventions to be put in place to tackle the underlying causes, at the same time as protecting local businesses.

Partnership working with National leads such as the PCC Katy Bourne in Sussex brings in innovative ideas which enables us to work together to target prolific offenders. We have observed a significant decrease in the amount of shoplifting from targeted intervention. In order to do that ourselves, we need accurate recording and reporting. I will be working to improve our systems

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and adopt some of the practices similar to those in Sussex so that we can encourage retailers to report and make a real impact.

Q4. (a) Supplementary Question - Is there any connection with organised crime making it a lot more complicated?

The Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) response – I am not aware of it, but obviously from an operational point of view there is some information sitting in the operational sphere which would not necessarily be shared with myself. It is not a hot topic that has been spoken about nationally which is one of the issues. More examples have been evident nationally rather than at a local level, and a lot of work is going on to put preventative measures in place to reduce it spreading across the rest of the country.

Q5. Supplementary Question - I have read through all the documentation and can find no reference to the actions of the travelling community. Perhaps the nearest your documentation comes to that position surfaces in you plan for Lincolnshire under 'Policing that Works' (Targeted and prioritised visibility) where it states under the section 'Establish a new multi-disciplinary Rural Crime Action Team', 'the capacity to investigate wider criminality of travelling criminals'. Now, I doubt whether this is referencing the travelling community as such, as I suspect this is really referencing those known criminals who live in one county but carry out their crimes in other counties. Given the recent visit by members of the travelling community to Boston, and the great distress that that visit caused, what amendments to your plan, referencing 'Policing that Works' do you intend to make to improve the protection for residents offered by Lincolnshire Police and what assurance can you give the Panel for dealing with any future events in Lincolnshire that matters will be dealt with positively?

The Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) response – The first thing I need to make clear is that not all traveller groups are criminals and some groups do not commit crime. Any members of any society in the community can cause criminal acts to take place. Sadly, when a traveller community enters a location people are fearful because of past experiences, but some just want to pass through the area peacefully.

There were a few incidents, however effective partnership working between Boston Borough Council and Lincolnshire Police proved outstanding and demonstrated that effective action can be taken in

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accordance with the law. Boston Borough Council has been a great partner.

There was a lot of questions put to Lincolnshire Police by both the community directly and I, and in various other forums about doing right by the community. One of the challenges the police have to work through is to prove criminality, and there is ongoing work to put cases together and bring the appropriate people to book.

We are working to ensure the right things are done to support the community, and the new legislation applied in Lincolnshire was one of the first times used in the Country. We need to continue to come together with a county-wide policy so that we are all clear on who to go to for information.

Something we have done previously, and very effectively in Lincolnshire is utilise specialists to check and advise on identifying ownership of equipment and trailers. Policing is doing what it can, and I would hope that it would assure the travelling community that you can establish the vehicles and equipment they are using are authentic.

There is more to be done and it is predominately an operating policy to hold them to account, but working in the partnership space, such as with Boston enables us to determine what worked well. I would like to thank our District colleagues for their efforts with this good example.

Q.5 (a) Supplementary Question - Are you satisfied that all District Council Offices understand the procedures for when travellers suddenly appear and stay in places they should not?

The Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) response – We need to assure ourselves as a county that we all have an equal understanding of what the processes are because people often move from one part of the country to another. We need to have processes in place to make sure that all districts are aware of what is going on. It is one of those difficult areas that you want to get right. These are often families with children and if criminality is involved then there are criminals that need holding to account. If that happens to be the travelling community then we treat them appropriately and fairly, otherwise we are alienating future generations rather than working with people. We can do more by tightening up our processes to make sure we are all working effectively together.

Q6. Supplementary Question – Regarding the new Draft on Community Safety, Policing and Criminal Justice Plan 2025 with some amendments. Do you want to comment on those amendments?

The Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) response – The draft briefly said there is a duty upon me to keep the Police and Crime Plan under review, and it needs to be relevant and pertinent to what is going on in the world. It is fair to say that the world is in some flux and has been for some time, so it did seem appropriate to make sure our plan was up to date. It is light touch, and some areas are significant in the sense of the national changes and awaiting the strategic policing requirement changes. From an overall plan point of view, the new plan is very much making sure we are on course to deliver the right things.