
Report to: Police Authority
Agenda item: 3
Date: 24 March 2020
Subject: Chief Constable's Report
Sponsor: Chief Constable
For: Information

1. Purpose of report

1.1 The Chief Constable's report brings to the attention of Members of the Police Authority the most pressing issues for the Chief Constable at the time of producing the report. Matters covered in this report are Covid19, resources, County Lines, HMICFRS inspections and stakeholder engagement.

2. Covid19

2.1 As the national position in relation to Covid19 is changing constantly, the Chief Constable will provide an up to date briefing to Members on BTP's planning for Covid19 at the Police Authority meeting. BTP is fully linked in to Public Health England, resilience forums and National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) in obtaining the latest position and has established a Gold Group to ensure a robust approach to risk management whilst maintaining operational effectiveness. Internal communications are being issued on a regular basis to keep the workforce informed.

3. Resources

3.1 Further to the update reported to Members in February, the significant effort to return officer numbers back to full establishment continues. The Chief Officer Group agree this is a critical priority in order to ease the pressure on existing resources, provide the necessary capability to respond to increasing demand, meet the industry's expectations in relation to a visible presence and enable the Force to deliver against the Policing and Strategic Plans.

3.2 In terms of officer numbers as at Period 12 BTP had 130 police officer vacancies against an establishment of 3153. This continues to be an improving position compared to Period 10 which was reported to February's Authority meeting when the

Force had 156 police officer vacancies. Police officer applications remain steady but PCSO applications have fallen and the last PCSO intake saw 25% fail the vetting process. PCSO vacancies have increased with 96 vacancies against an establishment of 309 (compared to 73 PCSO vacancies in Period 10). In terms of trajectory, the recruitment strategy will deliver full police officer establishment in June 2020

3.3 Additional recruitment and retention activity to that previously reported to February's Authority meeting include:

- Seven intakes of police officers totaling 143 officers (a mix of new recruits, transferees and PCSOs converting to PC) commence employment during March, including one intake in Scotland and our first ever intake in Liverpool.
- Innovative options to ease parts of the recruitment process, such as an SLA with Warwickshire Police to assist with pre-employment vetting and an extension to the provision of service by Optima Health to undertake pre-employment medicals.
- Student officers will now be recruited at Spine Point 1, which means BTP will remain competitive by matching the starting salary offered by the MPS and other forces. This was endorsed by Appointments & Remuneration Committee on 5 March.
- To aid retention the payment of South East Allowance will now match that of Home Office forces at agreed locations. This was also endorsed by Appointments & Remuneration Committee.
- Working with Penna, a specialist recruitment company, to develop BTP's brand and improve the Force's advertising campaign so that it stands out in a competitive recruitment market.

3.4 As reported to Members in February, frontline officers have been under discernible pressure due to the reduction in resources in 2019/20 as a result of the savings requirement and the increase in operational demand. Due to reduced resources at some police posts, officers are unable to deploy proactively as they are responding from incident to incident and managing additional investigations. At the last Authority meeting Members asked for some context which describes the impact being felt by officers and delivery of frontline policing. The following paragraphs aim to provide some examples to inform understanding.

- 3.5 In terms of increasing demand as at 9 March offences of violence against the person had increased by 4% against last year (an additional 520 offences), robbery had increased by 56% (an additional 360 offences), theft of passenger property had increased by 45% (an additional 6,352 offences), and overall notifiable offences had increased by 12% (an additional 7,500 offences). At this point in 2019/20 there have been 3 murders and 15 attempted murders on the rail and underground network. Developments across the railway (Birmingham New Street and London Bridge stations are two examples) have seen locations turn from rail stations to major transport hubs with substantial retail and entertainment expansion. The demand from mental health and safeguarding continues – over an 8 day period in March BTP officers responded to 12 fatalities on the rail and underground networks, which included 2 child fatalities. In summary, a very real increase in demand which BTP and its officers are doing their utmost to respond to.
- 3.6 By way of example, BTP's police post at London Victoria Station is a busy hub location. It has an establishment of 20 police officers but has been running with 6 vacancies and 7 PCSO vacancies from an establishment of 15. On a 10-link roster the reduced resources mean only one PC is working on any link day. The pressure of working at such a busy location whilst under resourced is starting to play out on individuals and the sustainability of working alone is impacting on morale. Four probationer officers are due to start at Victoria in April. Whilst this will help with numbers, the team already has a high proportion of young in-service officers who will need to be supported as they develop in skills, confidence and ability. Emergency rosters have been implemented locally at Victoria, Waterloo and London Bridge hubs in order to better utilise the current available resources.
- 3.7 The recruitment of new officers will alleviate this situation in time. However, the training and initial tutoring of new officers means they are not available at police posts for 6 months after arriving on the headcount. While overall officer numbers will begin to look more healthy, the reality of availability is different.
- 3.8 When recruitment is paused as it was earlier in 2019/20 to meet the funding challenge, vacancies naturally arise in a range of roles. It is clear that frontline response teams are carrying significant vacancies, while some non-response, non 24/7 teams are

better resourced. The additional focus that has been placed on EPSA management and ensuring the allocation of resources to those contracts also creates a situation where lower priority, non-core or enhanced policing functions are resourced while core response units are less well supported.

- 3.9 An exercise is underway to clearly set out those functions that should be resourced and maintained as a priority, with a sliding scale of prioritisation. In the short term this may involve resource redistribution and ongoing maintenance of officer numbers in those priority core functions. That may involve gapping in other, lower priority deployments and non-core functions. That may have implications in the capacity of BTP to meet equally all the priorities in the Strategy. It may also have funding implications, as it would be inappropriate to charge for resources that are not available in EPSAs. Equally, a situation that sees resources allocated to non-core or EPSA functions when core PSA funded functions are not resourced is inappropriate and not in accordance with the charges to PSA holders.

4. BTP County Lines Taskforce

- 4.1 An update on BTP's County Lines Taskforce was provided in the Chief Constable's report to Police Authority on 5 February. Members have asked for a further update at the Authority meeting on 24 March primarily to understand what is planned with the £3.3m grant provided by the Home Office for 2020/21 and how Members can be reassured that value for money will be achieved. This section of the Chief Constable's report aims to provide that reassurance.

4.2 Establishment of the taskforce

- 4.2.1 In late 2017 BTP identified the growing prominence of young and vulnerable people coming to notice on the rail network. This was closely aligned to the increased focus on safeguarding and contextualised by the emerging threat posed by County Lines, throughout Britain. Officers and rail staff regularly found themselves dealing with a range of behaviour, incidents and crime associated with vulnerable people, often associated with weapons and drugs, and connected to organised crime groups. This experience was validated by subsequent work conducted by the National Crime Agency which estimated that 40% of County Lines crime was facilitated through the rail network. This precipitated operational activity aims to address this emerging threat

to the safety of those using the rail network. This is clearly a challenge that goes to the heart of the policing functions of BTP and objective one 'Protecting People' in the Strategy. It is not a discretionary function and requires prioritised allocation of resource and focus.

4.2.2 In the Autumn of 2019, BTP's role in tackling the harms caused by County Lines criminality on the railway was recognised by the Home Office as playing a major role in the wider national effort to address County Lines offending. An initial grant was made to the Force of £1m for 2019/20. This grant enabled BTP to augment and enhance activity in this important area of criminality on the railway with the creation of a BTP dedicated County Lines taskforce – Operation Defiant. BTP's County Lines Taskforce was established on 2 December 2019 and is currently comprised of 31 officers, 2 police staff and a commissioned Child Exploitation Expert. In terms of headcount, a number of officer positions that were removed from the establishment (with associated savings) under the investigations workstream of BTP2021 have been reinserted in the overall establishment for the Taskforce.

4.2.3 The Home Office have since confirmed that the financial provision will continue throughout 2020/21 with a confirmed grant of £3.3m. The initial bid document submitted to the Home Office in 2019, which has been shared with the Authority Executive, remains valid. Following Home Office confirmation of funding for 2020/21 a more sustainable structure consisting of 39 resources has been agreed with Home Office officials.

4.2.4 BTP's strategic intent in tackling County Lines is to disrupt and dismantle County Lines crime groups that use the rail network, by creating a hostile environment for them to operate and protecting those they exploit, through timely and effective safeguarding. The tactics deployed in Operation Defiant complement those applied to tackle violence and other priority crimes and therefore enable a multifaceted benefit to be achieved.

4.3 Industry engagement

4.3.1 Relationships with local rail staff have benefited as a direct result of taskforce deployments and training has been developed with an external provider to help frontline staff identify signs of vulnerability and what to do in these circumstances. This

training package will be delivered to several hundred staff from train operating companies. These are companies that operate critical County Lines routes including Southeastern, Merseyrail, Avanti West Coast and South West Trains. The training will be supplemented by an e-learning package that will be provided industry-wide.

4.4 Measurements and results

4.4.1 The Home Office identified three key forces as partners - Merseyside, MPS and West Midlands (the three main drug export cities) and the taskforce routinely works in partnership with these colleagues. The taskforce has deployed across the network from Aberdeen to Brighton, Swansea to Skegness and Plymouth to Rhyl. BTP's focus is to protect the network, its strategic routes and key intelligence identified locations, pertaining to both export and import. Consequently, the taskforce has delivered joint deployments at stations or on routes with more than 15 other police forces, outside of the 3 that received specific funding.

4.4.2 The taskforce has already realised some significant results. To date the taskforce has carried out over 50 joint operational deployments, made over 200 arrests, over 100 drug seizures, 145 phone seizures, recovered 24 weapons and seized over £43k cash. Whilst the taskforce is deployed on specific County Lines intelligence-led operations, arrests are often made for routine policing matters, including weapons, anti-social behaviour, low-level violence and wanted people. Significant arrests have been made in places including Telford, Skegness, Basingstoke and the Medway towns. Feedback received for BTP's activity to date has been overwhelmingly complimentary, both from partner forces, rail staff, the Home Office and individual MPs including the Home Secretary and Policing Minister, both of whom have recently visited BTP to see County Lines operations in action first hand.

4.4.3 The Home Office have put in place arrangements to monitor the delivery and impact of their investment. BTP reports through the National County Lines Coordinating Committee and provides a monthly return to the Home Office Task & Finish Group which sets out activities and deliverables. BTP also reports on performance to the Home Office every two weeks. The report includes data pertaining to arrests, safeguarding interventions and commodity seizures and sets out year to date spend.

4.4.4 The Home Office tracks spend and at the time of the submission on 26 February the Force had spent or committed £825k of the £1m grant provided for 2019/20. This spend includes officer costs, training, technical equipment, travel and a training package devised and delivered by a charity. The taskforce is on track to spend the full grant allocation for 2019/20.

4.4.5 In terms of expenditure against the £3.3m grant for 2020/21 high level plans include £1.7m on resourcing the taskforce (39 posts), £500k towards collaborating with other police forces and £335k on overtime and non-pay expenditure. The operational requirements will be determined across the year which will in turn inform the allocation of the remaining £765k.

5. HMICFRS Inspections

5.1 Disruption Inspection

5.1.1 HMICFRS visited the Force between 3 -14 June 2019 to conduct an inspection into how well BTP aligns its priorities with the rail industry and minimise disruption to the rail network. HMICFRS submitted their report to the Secretary of State for Transport on 3 March 2020 and the Department for Transport (DfT) will determine when the report will be published. The report was copied to the Chief Constable and BTPA Chief Executive.

5.1.2 Work is already underway in the Force to develop an action plan in response the recommendations contained in the report. A communications strategy will be developed internally as well as for stakeholders. As with other HMICFRS inspections, progress against the recommendations will be reported through Audit & Risk Assurance Committee.

5.2 Custody Inspection

5.2.1 HMICFRS and HM Inspectorate of Prisons jointly conducted an unannounced inspection of BTP custody suites (Brewery Road and Central London Police Station) between 6 - 16 January 2020. This was the first unannounced inspection of BTP custody facilities and focused on the standards of treatment and conditions each police custody suite is expected to achieve for people in its custody.

5.2.2 The draft report was received by the Force on 2 March 2020 to identify any factual inaccuracies. HMICFRS will submit the report to DfT with HMICFRS suggesting the report is published week commencing 13 April 2020.

5.2.3 Overall, the inspection was positive, although some areas for improvement were identified. For example, resource levels, conducting face to face PACE reviews and some gaps in Force data. An action plan is already being developed to ensure the findings are addressed as a priority. The full report and progress against the action plan will be reported through Audit & Risk Assurance Committee.

5.3 Counter Terrorism Policing Inspection

5.3.1 In 2019 HMICFRS conducted a national inspection which examined how effective the police service is in contributing to Prevent, one of the strands of the UK Government's CONTEST strategy for countering terrorism. The report, which was published on 9 March 2020, is largely encouraging and found that forces understand the purpose of Prevent and are meeting their obligations under their 'Prevent duty'.

5.3.2 The report contained eight national recommendations. The Force is however considering how these national recommendations apply to BTP's priorities and capabilities as a national organisation and progress will be reported through Audit & Risk Assurance Committee.

6. **Stakeholder Engagement**

6.1 Since the Police Authority meeting in early February the Chief Constable has met with the following stakeholders – Secretary of State for Transport and Minister of State for Transport, Chair of the Transport Select Committee, Chief Executive of the Rail Delivery Group, CEO and Finance Director of GTR, Managing Director of Network Rail Southern Region, London's Victims Commissioner, and attended the Railway Business Awards. These events were all positive with discussions ranging from organisational partnerships, policing and crime, rough sleepers on the railway, graffiti, victim support, digital science and the changing strategic landscape across the railway, government and policing.