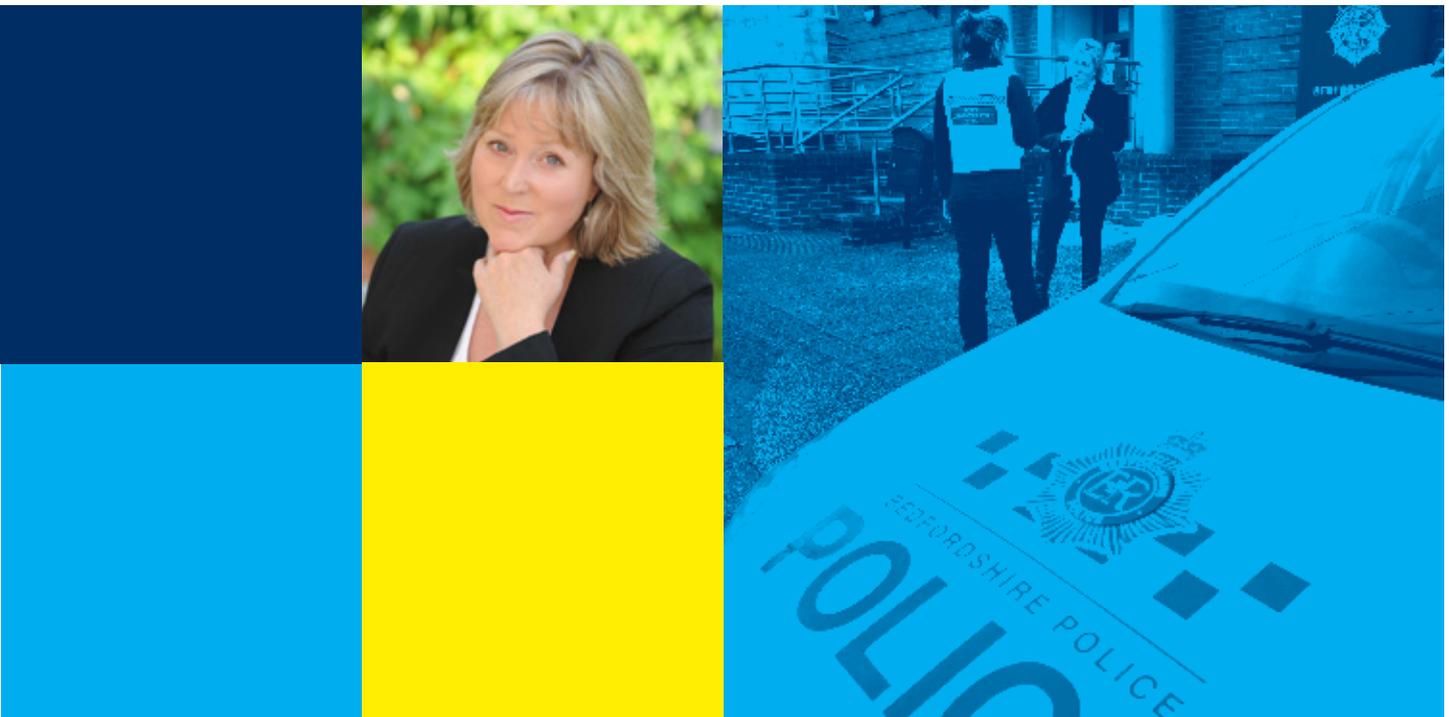




making the
money work



Helping Police to Help the Public

Building Better Policing for Bedfordshire

The Police and Crime Plan for our county





Introduction by Kathryn Holloway, your Police and Crime Commissioner

This Plan represents the strategic direction I am setting for Bedfordshire Police for the next four years. It explains the priorities which I am establishing, having listened to communities from throughout our county of 644,000 residents during the recent Police and Crime Commissioner Election Campaign, from the point at which I became a candidate on October 15 2015 to the vote on May 5 2016. It will be for the Chief Constable of Bedfordshire Police, Jon Boutcher, his top tier team and the Force as a whole to deliver on these priorities over my four-year term to follow this direction of travel to its ultimate destination; greater confidence in Bedfordshire Police and the service we provide to the public.

My Plan is designed to be accessible to all. It suggests common sense, practical, achievable and affordable solutions to Bedfordshire's Policing challenges. It aims to be the opposite of a complex business or technical manual, with impenetrable data. I want it to set the tone of my term of office as your Commissioner, clearly explaining my goals and progress to the public.

Funding

It is appropriate to address the issue of funding first. Bedfordshire Police have a budget of approximately £100 million. There have been historic issues with this level of funding of police in our county as a result of the way the National Police Funding Formula is constructed; it does not take into account data concerning Counter Terror or Serious Organised Crime, like drug dealing or human trafficking, which are expensive to police given the very significant investment in detective work, including surveillance, which is generally required to bring about successful prosecutions.

This has been a problem under administrations across the political spectrum, not just under the current Government. It is also why Bedfordshire's budget issues have long been characterised as funding for a rural force, despite our urban problems, principally – though not exclusively – relating to crime in our three largest towns of Luton, Bedford and Leighton Buzzard.

At the time of writing, in May 2016, the second election of Police and Crime Commissioners has led to a change of administration in Bedfordshire. Only weeks before the election, I met with the current Policing Minister, Mike Penning, who told me on the record that he is "personally committed to fairer funding of Bedfordshire Police, as is the Government" but that this would not amount to "a blank cheque." In other words, the will and intention appears to be there at national level to increase Bedfordshire Police's budget to more adequately reflect the demands we face across communities ranging from large town centres to market towns, villages and hamlets, but it will be up to me, as your choice for Police and Crime Commissioner, to spend any increase in our budget wisely and make the money work to maximum effect. The Minister is responsible for the overall National Funding Formula for all 43 forces and will determine what "fairer funding for Bedfordshire" ultimately amounts to.

In making this judgment I trust due consideration will be given to the fact that our county faces significant challenges that relate more commonly to the very largest city environments. The events of my first fortnight in office, in the last two weeks of May 2016, exemplify this; on May 11 a man died during his arrest in Bedford and the coroner confirmed, in opening the inquest, that he had ingested a quantity of drugs. This event was followed, within days, by the brutal murder of an Asian mother of four in Luton. This crime caused a wave of anxiety among the 50,000- strong Muslim community in the town as a result of a single line of inquiry relating to the possibility of a burglary at her home. Managing this response required the deployment of high visibility police patrols around the clock, the Chief Constable's presence in the town to talk with councillors and faith leaders and my own similar involvement to try to reassure the community and restore calm. Despite this, some individuals sought vigilante action against those they considered might be responsible, based purely on rumour, producing further policing challenges. Within a week, the conclusion of the annual Luton carnival was marked with a public order issue despite the presence of 100 officers to police the event. A brawl broke out in St George's Square, Luton, and groups of threatening youths appeared sporadically at other locations in the town including the Luton and Dunstable Hospital, after four stabbings. Officers faced youths armed with improvised weapons, including iron bars and a machete-style large knife. Bedfordshire Police called

in reinforcements from our tri-force colleagues and those in Thames Valley and Leicester.

In addition, the town produces other policing challenges more akin to the capital. It has required high-cost policing of demonstrations by organisations such as the English Defence League and Britain First. The costs of policing these, since 2010, have been approximately £2.9 million. The Counter Terror threat from Bedfordshire as a whole means the county is ranked third in the country, behind London and Birmingham, in terms of risk, and we face other significant issues from Serious Organised Crime, including drug, human trafficking and modern slavery, gun, knife and gang crime.

This level of local demand is the reason why Bedfordshire is the lead force in the tri-force collaboration arrangement including Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire, and leads the East as a region in the Eastern Region Special Operations Unit (ERSOU) including our Counter Terror Intelligence Unit (CTIU) and the Regional Organised Crime Unit (ROCU.) It is the case, therefore, that I hold the Chief Constable, Jon Boutcher, to account on behalf of the region's Police and Crime Commissioners for these units. I hope this assists the reader in understanding the rationale behind this arrangement and the key benefits of having strategic leadership over these specialist areas within our Force, since it faces by far the biggest challenges in the region as a whole in relation to organised crime and terrorism.

Financial Position

The Police Funding Settlement for 2016-17 confirmed a grant reduction of 0.6% for Bedfordshire (£400,000.) This level of reduction to grant, along with the requirement from Central Government to increase the police share of Council Tax by 1.99% to secure this funding, means that the budget for the Force should be very similar for the next four years through to 2019/20.

This does not mean the Force will not need to make savings during this period. Based on available information, it is likely that Bedfordshire Police will need to make £11.5 million worth of savings (following £25.3 million worth of previous savings made between 2011-12 and 2015-16.)

Bedfordshire will continue to show strong budget management and planning in the delivery of the savings required through transforming the way the Force delivers its services, both in collaboration with other Police Forces and with other blue light services and local authorities.

However, in comparison, to similarly sized areas and those with comparable levels of demand – especially in relation to Counter Terror and Serious Organised Crime – we are still very much a low-funded force and as Commissioner for Bedfordshire I will not only oversee the strongest possible management of our finances but will continue to lobby Government to ensure that our county receives an equitable financial settlement.

Due to the level of funding and the savings already achieved, this Force will find it harder to achieve further savings than others, but it will continue to protect local policing teams, safeguard vulnerable people and deliver its purpose of effectively fighting crime. Together with my financial audit team, I will relentlessly explore new opportunities for maximizing the available resources to protect our communities.

How Bedfordshire Police is Funded

Where the money comes from	2016-17 £m
Central Government Funding	68.3
Council Tax Precept	32.6
Collection Fund	0.6
Net Budget	101.5
Fees and Charges	4.9
Other Government Grants	2.5
Gross Budget	108.9

How it is spent	2016-17 £m
Police Officers and Staff	89.4
Supplies, Contracted Services, Premises and Vehicles	17
Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner	0.9
Commissioner Funded Initiatives	1.6
Total	108.9

Analysis of Commissioner Funded Initiatives		
Project	Funding Source	2016-17 £m
Community Safety Fund	Base Budget	0.8
Victim Services Grant	Ministry of Justice	0.8
Total		1.6

Evidence-based Arguments.

I am entirely convinced that Evidence Based Policing is the way forward to best support our arguments over funding and staffing and to carry the public and officers with us, creating confidence over the effectiveness of any change where new policing initiatives are concerned. According to the Economic and Social Research Council, "Evidence-based policing is a way of making decisions about 'what works' in policing. It helps the police service make more informed decisions about what policies and practises are cost-effective and improve their service to the public."

In the past we have made our case of requiring 300 extra officers on the basis of comparing the ratio of staff against population and pointing to London and other areas to justify this. It should be evident that no such easy comparison exists; the Luton area may stand fairly close comparison with the capital and there are plenty of examples of cross-over crimes and similar levels of threat, from gang, knife and drug crime to Counter Terror, but much of Bedfordshire is rural or comprises far smaller towns and settlements. Only by making a study of the genuine level of demand, and when and where it exists, and working back from this to an analysis of how many officers would be needed to best meet this need can a proper, evidence-based, argument be made.

This is why I am supporting Bedfordshire Police working together with Cambridge University, the College of Policing and the Home Office to provide a modern demand profiling method to deliver reliable data and proof to strengthen our argument.

In exactly the same way we need to prove the effectiveness of policing projects and pilot studies and provide proper measurement of the work of those to whom the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) provides grants for Victim Support, Community Safety or Crime Prevention to prove we are more effectively tackling crime, getting value for money and providing satisfaction to our public.

There are also further opportunities for our force to apply for grants from within Government, relating to new initiatives bringing genuine innovation and to help build stronger, safer communities and prevent crime. Wherever such an opportunity exists you may rest assured that I will seek to access it on behalf of Bedfordshire Police and the public we serve.

Collaboration across other forces.

I will work to make your money work across the public purse, sharing facilities and supporting other services where possible. Bedfordshire Police is already involved in significant sharing of specialist services and their costs with its neighbours, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire, in an arrangement known as Joint Protective Services (JPS) as a tri-force initiative. This is not a merger or amalgamation but just what it says, a mutual support network which aims to avoid the on-going duplication of costly services where one department could serve all three counties equally well. Wherever there are genuine savings and efficiencies for this county I will support and extend this joint-working, but I will not do so if overall benefits do not result for Bedfordshire and its communities. I am your Commissioner and you rightly expect me to put your interests first.

Currently the Major Crime Unit, Counter Terrorism and Detection of Extremism, Scientific (Forensic) Services, Armed Policing, Civil Contingencies, Public Order Policing, the Police Dog Unit, Roads Policing/Automatic Number Plate Recognition, Firearms Licensing, Professional Standards, Procurement, ICT and HR are all delivered collaboratively. A working total of savings achieved so far stands at £15 million across the three force Strategic Alliance and the ambition is to save a further £14 million in this way. These savings are required by the three forces to ensure that we continue to protect and maximise our frontline local policing capability. On-going plans for further joint-working, as I take on the role of Commissioner, include a shared Control Room on two sites answering calls to common standards, Custody management and Criminal Justice. Increasing collaboration with Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire remains a critical part of my plan to deliver effective policing within the available budget.

But the drive to collaborate will not proceed at all costs. A business case will always have to be made that this works for Bedfordshire and is the best option compared with alternatives to provide a balance between the best price and the best possible service for the public here. For example the tri-force is not the only prospect for collaboration: more and more opportunities have evolved to collaborate across the other 999 services, especially with our colleagues in Fire and Rescue, who so often work alongside us, whether in road accidents or major emergencies. I will be exploring these possibilities and business cases as well to make sure that the choice made represents both best value and the best possible service to you.

Further exciting opportunities lie ahead with a commitment to working as part of seven surrounding county forces, not just three, given the success of such joint-working in the recent past which makes the Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire tri-force the most successful collaborative hub in the country. These seven counties are Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Kent.



Tri-force collaboration with the Strategic Alliance between Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire forces

These forces have a joint policing budget of £1.3 billion and some 23,000 personnel. Early opportunities for joint working - and savings - include those in procurement, allowing all seven forces to reap the benefits of bulk-buying and price reduction, vetting of staff to a common national standard and the anti-

corruption element of Professional Services, which forces have traditionally experienced problems resourcing.

The strategic vision for this joint working remains the need to add strength to each force individually, helping them to deliver both value for money and effective public services. It continues to be agreed that all areas of policing activity, with the exception of neighbourhood policing, will be considered for collaborative working and that, despite collaborative activity, the local identity of each force will continue to be recognised. In short, this is not about building some kind of giant "Super Force" but helping one another to deliver the best policing we can within our budgets, across county borders.

I intend that any savings achieved in this way, which go beyond those which are required for budgetary demands - savings - will be invested in local policing in Bedfordshire. This is the key driver for collaboration; to achieve better joint-working to protect our communities and secure savings that enable me to both protect and enhance the frontline.

Athena - a common IT platform

Effective joint working across the seven Eastern forces, as well as maximum efficiency within the tri-force, will depend on the introduction of the Athena common IT platform. The programme to deliver this £32 million project launched in 2010. Athena is set to allow forces to manage intelligence, investigation, custody details, case preparation and warrants, all from the same system, replacing the multi-system set-up and allowing each force to be aware of the policing activity of the other Athena Forces so that the arrest of an individual wanted in another police area will be shared, for example, as will background intelligence concerning a particular individual. It is, in essence, a means to join up information among neighbouring forces.

Athena has been introduced in Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk and has not been without its teething difficulties. There have been examples of loss of service which have fallen below the required 99.999% availability. Athena had been due to be introduced in Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire on November 14 2016. However, the supplier has been asked for further work to ensure efficiency and operability of the system. I can assure you that neither I, nor Commissioners in these neighbouring forces, will be launching the system here without proper assurances that these matters have been addressed and that the system has proper resilience and is fit for purpose.

Future Update

This Plan, which is a legal requirement of your Police and Crime Commissioner, which needs to be updated annually with a report to you on progress, looks both at the challenges we currently face here in Bedfordshire and ahead to those which are part of a changing pattern of crime and policing demand in the twenty-first century, to try to anticipate and make provision for emerging threats to secure an umbrella of protection for our residents, wherever they live, into the future.

Victims

It also explains my commitment to putting victims and their needs front and centre as I also have a legal requirement to commission victims' services. I am committed to the principal of Restorative Justice to give them a greater say in how their cases are dealt with by the courts, allowing access to those who preyed on them in the first place, under controlled circumstances, to allow victims to move on and criminals to fully understand the impact of the crimes they commit on individual lives.

The "and Crime" agenda – working with Victim Support and Community Safety Partners

In addition to my responsibilities towards victims, I am tasked with distribution of specific funds to assist to strengthen the safety of our communities and to try to break the cycle of crime. The majority of such funds were distributed by my predecessor for the financial year ahead, which means my plans are partly aspirational for 2016-17. However a total of £449,392 remains and I am inviting bids by June 20 2016 from organisations helping to tackle key issues of demand in this county. I am particularly interested in bids dealing with the urgent issue of emergency refuge for those fleeing domestic violence and supporting its victims or helping the recovery of those who have suffered child sexual abuse, whether in the present or historically, youth-orientated projects to help combat on-line bullying or gang-related violence and counselling for the vulnerable, such as victims of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM.)

I have arranged for this grant-funding to be more widely advertised than ever before, in newspapers throughout the county as well as within the local public and voluntary sector, so that the maximum number of potential partners may be made aware of this possibility to apply for grant funding to encourage the best range and standard of applications for these public funds.

Public Sector Partners

In the past, individual agencies, local authorities, parts of our National Health Service and the police too often worked in "silos" dealing with their own particular area of activity without truly linking with others across the public sector to handle problems more collectively. All that, thankfully, is now changing and I believe enormous benefits can result. We have collective resources, facilities and workforces, which together can produce solutions as never before. In Bedfordshire, for example, a police officer, paramedic and mental health nurse are starting to work together in a single vehicle to try to ensure those with mental health problems do not end up in the cells or criminal justice system but on a pathway to appropriate care. I supported this before I became Commissioner, introducing the Mental Health Lead at Bedfordshire Police to the Minister with responsibility for Mental Health, the Rt. Hon Alistair Burt MP. Both of us are keenly watching the project as a blueprint for joint working with other services, shoulder to shoulder.

It is now accepted that the joined-up approach to crime is the way forward since those involved in repeat offending are generally known to, and a challenge for, a host of other related services from housing, education and health back to policing. This is the concept of Integrated Offender Management across services and offers the direction of travel.



Election Day, accepting the role

A personal approach

As a former reporter, I have got out on the frontline since I first contemplated standing for this role to see for myself the challenges being faced by our officers – at night, overnight, at weekends – handling 999 calls, in the Control Room dealing with life-threatening emergencies and less immediate threats which remain potentially life-changing for those who report them, in the Night Time Economy Vans on our high streets while officers deal with the consequences of drinking and our pubbing and clubbing culture, and in our specialist units, like Cybercrime, designed to meet a specific crime threat and public demand. I could not have more respect for the job they do as a result.

I want them to be able to have access to me, so officers can report matters which concern them, without fear or favour, and to work with them at all ranks to get their frank response to changes. I want to support them and boost morale. When I started to ride-along with our officers, informally visit them on our high streets or gain contact to write features on their work as a journalist, I heard examples of matters of employment which undermine morale – for example an officer who spoke of twelve different start times in twelve different days and Christmas shift patterns changed repeatedly in the months leading up to this family event. Many of our officers marry within the police and raise their families together. They need to be able to rely on duty times, except in the most extreme circumstances, to achieve an appropriate work-life balance and to deliver proper care to their children. If this is not supported, one parent or other may be forced to leave us.

Project Boost the Frontline

The first project I have initiated as Commissioner is Project Boost the Frontline. This will have three separate elements: It will have a literal component seeing how we can raise and maintain the morale of our officers and staff so we retain them. It will look at the officers we already employ to see whether any can be returned to duty to boost the numbers on the frontline, releasing them from desk-bound employment, for example. I have started in my own office as I did not feel I could justify the retention of a Staff Officer, paid for by the police and taxpayer, as my assistant, as previously.

Some 5.5% of police officers' time and 5.8% of police staff time is lost to sickness. Bedfordshire Police has levels of absenteeism that can and must be improved upon to support frontline colleagues who are often working 12-hour shifts. Our rate of staff on restricted and light duties is higher compared to some other forces – arguably as the result of the stresses of the job, with fewer colleagues available for back-up than elsewhere – but no organisation can indefinitely support those who cannot do the work for which they were recruited and it will be part of this project to determine how we can support and help officers back to work from either reduced duties or long-term sick leave. As a result I intend to investigate the Occupational Health support which this requires.

I need to challenge the Force to develop more effective strategies around key areas of Human Resource Management in this area too such as Absence Policies, Monitoring of Absence and its Management, Health and Well-being at Work Initiatives and Accident Prevention.

We also need evidence-based information from other forces to find out what is best practise and how we can introduce it to boost the way we work and produce as many hours policing as possible from each shift, supplying effective new technology to reduce time lost in note-taking and other recording and to make communication with the force and public easier.

A Digital Communication Offer

I have secured an offer for Bedfordshire, free of charge for two years, of a digital communications platform which would allow police to communicate instantly with all officers in a major incident, or to pass on information about vulnerable missing people or those who are wanted, as examples. In an emergency it allows a force to instantly reach its officers, wherever they are (but automatically excludes those on sick leave or holiday) to establish when they might be available to bolster a major rescue and recovery response. It also allows a police force to contact members of the public who sign up to it in an emergency to pass on critical information at once, in real time, as well as informing individual communities of perceived threats as they happen, not afterwards when a suspect or vehicle is known to have been involved in burglaries, for example.

It has twenty different methods of contacting the police and public including text messages and voice messages to landlines for those who are not regular users of computers and even the ability to change motorway signs. It can deliver messages in different languages. The company works with more than 8,000

police agencies across the US from seven out of ten of its largest cities to the smallest police departments. It sent 14 million public service messages in 3 days after Hurricane Sandy in New York, for example. Naturally this technology – which would, potentially, put Bedfordshire in the forefront of modern communication with its officers and public – must be compatible with IT introductions across the police nationally. The offer alone must be independently assessed as proper, transparent and appropriate to our needs. This is why I have placed it before the national Police ICT Company, on the instruction of the Home Secretary, to see whether it considers such a county-wide pilot might be welcome for evidence to be gathered to establish whether this enhances our service to the public and facilitates delivery of our operational services.

Helping the Police to Help the Public

We are policed by consent in Britain and policing is not, as a result, something which is imposed on us as citizens or done for us, with no part remaining for communities and individuals to contribute. This is not unique to policing but also reflects the way others have needed the public to adapt and play their part to continue to deliver services to them, as a response to increased demand; for example, our GPs used to make routine house calls but now we go to them in all but the most urgent cases.



Out and about in Bury Park

That is why this plan also looks to the part our residents have to play, whether as police volunteers, charitable partners or members of our neighbourhood protection schemes, to help the police to help the public and build better policing for Bedfordshire as a whole. This is a priority for me to extend across all our communities as some, currently, are far better represented than others in such joint working and enjoy a greater feeling of security as well as a connection to policing in their areas than others.



I was elected to represent you and to spend Bedfordshire Police's budget to reflect your priorities when you gave me the democratic mandate to become your Commissioner.

These priorities are as follows:

1. **A return of more visible Community Policing across the County.**
2. **To re-build public confidence in Bedfordshire Police.**
3. **To ensure that the police are available when we need them most.**
4. **Putting victims at the centre of the way we police and prosecute.**
5. **A fair deal on policing wherever you live – in the town or country.**
6. **Protecting the police to protect the public with a proper duty of care.**
7. **Genuinely being a Commissioner for all communities.**
8. **Working with partners to break the cycle of serial offending and to prevent crime where possible.**

Spending money wisely in my own office

In addition, I will use taxpayers' money wisely. I will not employ a Deputy or a Public Relations (PR) Agency for example, dispensing with the services of the latter when the three-month notice, required under its Contract with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, expires.

I intend to increase full-time employment within the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner only where absolutely essential, where required by law, for example, as in the case of a Chief of Staff and to handle Transparency so you can see clearly what decisions I make, when, where and why. I believe we need quality employees to handle such challenges as managing the police budget to best effect and will recruit a Head of Financial Scrutiny to oversee this and to examine the business case for all individual projects. Where possible I will amalgamate roles. For example, it makes sense to me that the Chief of Staff who exists to keep me and the office on the correct statutory path should also oversee Business and Compliance as these are related activities.

To strengthen our reputation, explain police actions and help re-build public confidence, we also need an experienced Head of Public Information. I am impatient with the argument that policing is a business where the public are our customers. A more appropriate analogy is that the public are our employers, who pay for us from their taxation purse, and their opinion matters. We need to communicate with them effectively and pro-actively so that this is an informed opinion, based on the facts, not supposition and rumour, whenever we are getting things right, and even more importantly, when events have not gone according to plan.

All permanent appointments will be subject to a fair and equitable appointment process. Senior posts will be advertised on both a national and local basis to ensure the best possible

selection of applicants and at least one independent member of the panel will be part of the interview process.

In general I will employ specialist help to deal with specific projects, paying for such assistance only when we need it and not when we do not, to help keep costs as low as is achievable. I come from a specialist consultancy background myself, since 2000, and I know from experience that it is often possible to contract in a higher level of expertise this way, since such individuals frequently do not want to work permanently for a single organisation. Working only on projects when strictly necessary, such temporary appointments will create no additional costs of employment and those who are recruited will work at a set price on specific tasks with clear deadlines for delivery which will not be allowed to slip.

I have been determined to keep interim appointments to a minimum to allow me to advertise and recruit to the limited number of permanent roles as quickly as is practically possible to reduce spending on temporary posts, as those in short-term 'Acting' senior roles attract higher fees as a result.

Working with the Police and Crime Panel

I intend to work more fully and effectively with the Police and Crime Panel, comprised of individuals from across the political spectrum who hold me to account. The Panel have very significant experience of policing matters, including direct employment by the police and international consultancy in police training. I wish to ask them to look at specific areas to assist the force and OPCC at minimal or no extra cost to the public, for example to revise the extensive Estates Strategy Review they undertook in 2012 to consider our redundant and under-used buildings and to conduct a best practise review of approaches to specific areas of crime across the 43 forces relating to matters such as Domestic Abuse.

My responsibility

Finally, it is my task and responsibility to be your voice and to be on receive as well as transmit when it comes to your views on policing and crime in our county. I intend to communicate with you as fully as possible.

I will build relationships with our town and parish councils and three larger unitary authorities to provide feedback in person on this Plan and its progress to your representatives. I will meet and speak with you at dedicated public forum events and build a relationship with our partners throughout the public and charity sectors.

I will arrange regular public meetings accompanied by the Chief Constable, Deputy Chief Constable, Assistant Chief Constable or relevant Superintendent to discuss your local policing concerns, depending on the area and subject, at least every eight weeks.

I will go further, by assigning members of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to reach out to you at public events as Ambassadors to explain what we are doing and how we are doing it and to bring feedback to me on your views of this Plan and its progress.

I will ensure parish councils receive a strategic report from me via a new (cost-effective) website, for ease of printing by Clerks at minimal cost, at the beginning of each month and visits from my Ambassadors throughout the year as well as an annual Parish Council Forum to which a representative from each parish council across the county will be invited to meet with me and Bedfordshire Police's most senior officers.

I will engage with you online, in person by appointment, on social and traditional media, to be a visible, approachable Commissioner clearly engaged in delivery of the priorities which you set for me, democratically, at the ballot box.

I will ensure my staff deal fairly and equitably with the issues you raise through my Office and me and that we make every possible effort to reply in timely fashion to your approaches.

This is my promise to you and my Plan to deliver better policing for Bedfordshire.



With Assistant Chief Constable Mike Colbourne, signing the Declaration of Acceptance of Office

My Priorities, and Yours

1. A return of more visible Community Policing across the County.

It is true of every single one of the communities I have visited across the county as I prepared for this role over the last seven months, that each expressed the desire for more visible police in their neighbourhood as their number one priority. This remarkable consistency extended from the rural villages of North to South Bedfordshire, was voiced in market towns like Ampthill, Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard and was the same key priority of those addressing me in diverse communities in Bedford and Luton.

The police watchdog body, HMIC, commented in 2015 that the police generally are in danger of "sleep-walking" away from communities. More accurately, this observation should perhaps have been "sleep-driving" as policing, without a Community Policing component, is delivered via police vehicles, rather than by an approachable force, on foot where appropriate, speaking to the citizens it protects and building relationships with them.

I attended the Rural Fire and Crime Event at Scald End, on March 21 2016, alongside our Deputy Chief Constable, Mark Collins, who was commendably frank; he believed that it had been "a big mistake" for Bedfordshire Police to lose Community Policing four years ago in the pursuit of savings and that this had resulted in the loss of both public confidence and local crime intelligence, providing the force with the vital knowledge of what is actually happening on the ground in each area.

The Chief Constable, Jon Boutcher, echoes this view saying:

"I have made this clear since joining Bedfordshire. The removal of local policing as a means to provide the cuts demanded by the previous spending review has had an ever more detrimental impact on the Force. I am an absolute advocate for Community (local) Policing. This will enable us, over time, to reduce our demand."

With my support we will now put this right, despite the significant financial pressures we face. Action is being taken immediately to do so. I am supporting a minimum of 7 Community Policing Hubs across the county. These will provide grass-roots policing of the neighbourhoods in which they are based and the surrounding area.

Each hub is headed up by a Sergeant and supported by a combination of Police Constables and Special Constables (with full warranted police powers) together with Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs.)

Bedfordshire Police is in the process of recruiting officers, Specials and PCSOs currently for this specific purpose. There will be three intakes of police officer recruits in 2016, with the first cohort of 32 joining our Community Policing team on December 1st. There will be at least two further intakes before the end of the financial year 2016/17 and this recruitment drive aims to direct such recruitment directly to 999 Response and Community Policing, to increase the effectiveness of both.

Any unacceptable discrepancy that we have within the Joint Protective Services – providing more officers than our share compared with Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire – will also be

addressed by me, with the backing of the Chief Constable, to release such officers back to our frontline.

The current bases for Community Policing teams are Luton Police Station, Futures House Luton, Dunstable Police Station, Biggleswade Police Station, Greyfriars Police Station and Kempston HQ, also using the following, as required, for appointments or as drop-in bases, in Flitwick, Houghton Regis, Leighton Buzzard and Riseley.



Talking to PCSO from the Leighton Buzzard Safer Neighbourhood Team

To achieve the maximum benefit of new, more visible, policing in communities I want them, where appropriate, to be based in areas from which police stations have disappeared, rather than simply locating them in buildings with a significant existing police presence. I want Community Hubs outside our main towns, ideally, to share the facilities of the fire stations which remain, especially in more rural areas - in Ampthill and Shefford for example – and will be examining the possibilities which exist for this with the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service.

To address key areas of urban demand, as well as those of our rural communities, there need to be bases in Luton, Bedford, Dunstable, Houghton Regis and Leighton Buzzard.

Where Leighton Buzzard is concerned, I immediately raised questions regarding the policing of our third largest town as part of my role of holding the force to account. I will be holding my first public forum to explain the policing plan for the town

as a result, which includes a new operational initiative to target the most prolific habitual criminals on a daily basis to ensure that those who should be observing a curfew or are on other bail conditions are precisely where they should be and not out committing further offences or causing nuisance.

This has been my first priority, in holding the Chief Constable to account, calling on him, together with his Executive Team and Supt. Sharn Basra in the South of the county, to develop this enhanced Crime Response Plan for Leighton Buzzard. As a result, the Deputy Chief Constable, Mark Collins, has been appointed the senior policing lead on this, to become a figurehead for this fast-expanding community. We will hold the forum for Leighton Buzzard together within weeks.

I intend to turn around the “closed” sign on the station door. Our officers are often out of the building in the course of their duties but, if the building is occupied, the principle has to be that “if we’re in we’re open” and will not refuse to take enquiries, especially since the Estates’ Review of 2012 established that there are only a handful of these per day. Residents need to understand though that it will be necessary to ring the 101 number to register concerns if officers, Specials and PCSOs are out of the station in the course of their police duties in the community. DCC Collins is backing me in a drive to recruit local volunteers who may be prepared to provide extra back-up to ensure a more regular presence at the station, by day.



The ‘Closed’ sign at Leighton Buzzard Police Station

DCC Collins, also served in another force area with the challenges of policing a combination of towns and villages, Dyfed Powys. I will support an initiative successfully introduced there, of Key Beat Locations – with a police officer present at the same place, at the same time, every day. This visible policing creates public confidence, acts as a deterrent and encourages the public to pass on information regarding police and crime concerns more easily, since many of us are, understandably, reluctant or unable to travel to an enquiries office or wish to talk such matters through on a more informal basis.

The deployment of police is a matter for the Chief Constable but it is important that Jon Boutcher and his senior team understand that they have my total support of such operational solutions.

For those who scoff at the notion that such traditional policing methods work to reduce crime, and suggest that this is some form of window-dressing to pander to uninformed public concerns, I would like to point to proven results, shown to me at the Evidence-based Policing Conference at Portcullis House, Westminster, on April 20 2016.

In just one example, the Metropolitan Police (Insp. Ben Linton) presented the results of a Community Policing initiative involving bus stops in neighbourhoods around the capital which had been identified as “hot-spots” of crime. Fifty were selected for brief, but visible, policing on foot at three points in the day by a police or community support officer, and a control group of fifty were also monitored, which were not subject to these visits, for crime occurring within 50 metres of the bus stop. The controlled study showed a 38% decrease in crime relating to the bus stops with visible police patrols within the 50 metre zone¹.

I will support the Local Community Policing initiative of Operation Sentinel – our squad battling anti-social behaviour – which moves into areas en masse to pick up local crime information and reassure the public and I have recently seen and heard for myself the very positive reaction of residents (in Luton’s Bury Park) to one such patrol.

I will protect the budget to continue recruitment of officers for the specific purpose of Local Community Policing and support recruitment of Special Constables. Project Boost the Frontline, already described, will aim to release as many officers already employed by us to frontline duties as possible, which can only further support this commitment.

There are, of course, arguments, at a time of austerity and acute pressure on budgets, that Local Community Policing is a less important component of police work than others. I disagree. The police rely on the public’s support in all that they do. It is, in effect, a Contract with them, since they fund the police service, to ensure that we deliver the type of policing which makes them feel secure in their communities and homes. Without this solid foundation it is not an exaggeration to state, on the basis of thousands of conversations I have had since becoming a candidate for this role, that public confidence has faltered in Bedfordshire Police due to the lack of visible policing by approachable officers in recent years. The restoration of Local Community Policing in Bedfordshire is, to my mind, the most critical single component in restoring that confidence once more.

This does not mean we will be ignoring our regional and national responsibilities of course. These include the security of the capital - to which our motorway and rail links lead - UK plc and public safety, although I will continue to robustly argue that the back door to London cannot be kept safe without full funding of Bedfordshire’s Counter Terror operations (and anti-radicalisation programmes.) We cannot subsidise such operations from within our existing budget and there is a moral responsibility to ensure that we are not asked to, since protecting the capital in this way should not be the left to the taxpayers of Bedfordshire.

¹ Obtained from the Evidence Based Policing presentation

2. To re-build public confidence in Bedfordshire Police.

I fully understand the critical importance of communicating effectively with the public, given my own background, working across television, radio and print in my early career as a reporter and presenter, together with 17 years as a specialist in the release of public information, advising police and fire chiefs, military leaders and boards of our largest companies, especially in an emergency.

Open and transparent public communications, working hand in hand with the media who can provide information most accessibly, quickly and widely across the population, is a vital component to win – and retain – public trust.

This should never be regarded as a reluctant afterthought by any sophisticated organisation, let alone one which is paid for by the public and which has a duty to explain its actions to them.

In almost any police event of any magnitude, explaining what has happened and what we are doing about it, and doing so as quickly as possible is essential. This is especially true given the speed of social media in responding to breaking events if we want to reassure our residents and give them accurate information from an authoritative source, which they can trust. For example, in the aftermath of the tragedy which unfolded in Shoreham in August 2015 when a vintage Hawker Hunter jet crashed onto the busy A27 causing multiple deaths at 1.20pm in the afternoon of August 22 2015, the first tweet was sent within the same minute, according to The Daily Telegraph.

At Bedfordshire Police we need the capacity to respond instantly to such events, to pass on reliable information through both social and conventional media and to update it regularly across all our communications platforms.

I will ensure that we are gatekeepers to information in the sense that we are a conduit through which information flows to the public and not in the sense that we are seeking to withhold or restrict facts. We will communicate openly as far as practically possible within the limits of litigation or independent investigation of police operations and officers. In my view, withholding information is the hallmark of an organisation which fails, especially in handling a crisis.

We must be prepared to be able to communicate in even the most demanding events. We have the M1 and A1 running through our county, the former directly alongside an international airport in Luton, plus main rail lines running North out of the capital. We are ranked third after London and Birmingham in terms of Counter Terror risk.

I will ensure that we have a Crisis Communications Plan that is fit for purpose to handle a mass media response in the, thankfully rare, event that it is required and am well qualified to do so.

This is another area where collaboration with our neighbouring forces would prove vital, to assist and bolster our small press team in terms of the numbers of communications officers which prove necessary in a major emergency. We would, naturally, provide similar assistance in a reciprocal manner. These are arrangements which I need to formalise as part of our due diligence to ensure we are prepared and a Head of Public Information will arrange and oversee them

Project Open Justice. Effective communications, as a force, is not just a matter for emergencies. Justice must be seen to be done for it to be effective.

While I understand the recent decision to close Bedford's Magistrates Court, along with others around the county, to produce savings by moving hearings to Luton, I am deeply concerned regarding the impact of this on Open Justice. As a former reporter I covered courts from the press bench first for a local evening paper, then for an ITV regional television programme and, later, national breakfast station. As a result I saw, at first hand, the results of the reporting of the courts.

This has been of real importance in maintaining public confidence in the police by allowing the public, and especially victims, to learn of successful prosecutions and hear of the detective and forensic work which brings justice to those victims and punishment to offenders, which is especially true of Crown Court coverage. Even the process of being identified in the local press acts as a deterrent and can stop the first-time burglar, shoplifter or drink driver from becoming an habitual offender.

Our county newspapers no longer have the staff to cover courts on their own doorstep on a daily basis nor to travel from outlying towns where they are based to Luton to do so. I will launch Project Open Justice to help. I will ensure that news services are much more effectively informed of approaching cases in both Magistrates and Crown Courts. I will encourage the freelance news agencies which report such cases to cover our courts in support of local media. I will make the force's investigating and forensic staff available in key cases to explain the vital work undertaken to bring about successful prosecutions to prepare the "backgrounders" which follow verdicts.

I will, in short, ensure we explain Bedfordshire police action to the public, build confidence in the force and, where possible, remove the secrecy which could now surround court appearances and mask the delivery of justice.

Spreading the word. A pro-active communications approach is not just critical to emergency response or ensuring justice is transparent, it is an everyday requirement of each and every successful police force.

However excellent our service and innovatory our initiatives, if the public do not know about them, they take place in a vacuum. I cannot count the number of people I spoke to while preparing for this role who did not even know about the 101 number – to be used in all but life-threatening emergencies – let alone our practical solutions to problems such as anti-social behaviour (Operation Sentinel) or of nuisance moped and quad bikers (Operation Meteor.) Completing a single media announcement, and a handful of follow-up media releases, and expecting our 644,000 strong population to be fully updated is not working.

This is why I need to build a stronger communications network to link our public and police. They need the tools to do the job including an updated website, clearing explaining who the public can contact and how and allowing them to report information at the click of a button on first contact. They will be supported by my own office's Ambassadors, pointing them towards this type of information at every public meeting.

I need to boost public confidence in our Force at every point of contact and by delivering better online tools to make this easier in a digital age, including portals to report individual types of crime on the Force website.

Explaining when things go wrong. It takes an organisation which is confident to explain matters as fully as possible and as quickly as possible when things go wrong. This is a constant risk since officers are in contact with the public in circumstances where, on occasion, they have to be physically restrained by them.

They deal with people who may already have a series of vulnerabilities which are not immediately apparent. Those who come into police custody are disproportionately more likely to suffer from mental health issues, to be under medication which may or may not be being used correctly, and to be under the influence of drink or illegal drugs or both, as the result of which they can be in a correspondingly fragile state of health.

It follows that accidents do happen, people do suffer health emergencies and, on incredibly rare and deeply regrettable occasions, officers themselves can make mistakes which have tragic consequences.

What happens next is critical. We have just seen the outcome of the Hillsborough Inquiry (on April 26 2016) and the jury's finding relating to that tragedy. South Yorkshire Police were found to have made errors on the day and responded wholly inappropriately afterwards in altering records. We already live in cynical times and I am well aware of the increased distrust of the police, wherever they operate in the UK, that this episode will be likely to create.

Closer to home, a recent disciplinary hearing resulted in the dismissal of two of our officers in the Faruk Ali case. They were found to have behaved in a manner which is unacceptable in any force towards a young man with autism. We had not communicated well around this hearing in my professional view. It was held at a venue 30 miles from Luton, which was not on a direct transport link with the town, making it difficult for family members and supporters to attend what was a public hearing. The hearing itself was overseen by a senior officer from another force, but not a legally qualified chair, as a change of legislation on January 1 2016 now requires.

There were entirely genuine reasons for both: Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire forces have agreed venues for such hearings in what aims to be a "neutral" location, including Wyboston where this one took place. The papers for the case were served on the officers prior to January 1 and the law meant that a legally qualified chair could not have been appointed as a result. The problem was that we did not explain these matters adequately, in my view, and considerable public disquiet, especially in Luton, was caused as a result. I give this example not to cause fresh anxiety but to explain why we must do differently in future when it comes to communicating with the public when things go wrong.

With me as Commissioner, Bedfordshire Police and I will explain what has happened as fully as possible within the legal constraints placed upon us and in fairness to all parties. We cannot be risk averse with communications as greater difficulties result in the long term if we do not explain any unfortunate or

tragic matter as far as possible to the public at the time and as facts become known. I have already taken this stance to reassure the public and those more directly involved in the aftermath of a man's death during an arrest in Midland Road, Bedford, on May 11 2016, where it was necessary to remind the media and wider public that it would be grossly unfair to impute wrongdoing by the officers involved until all the facts emerge (and are established by the Independent Police Complaints Commission.) Such speculation, in my view, entirely fails all parties in a rush to judgement when what is needed by all concerned are the true facts.

I gave a commitment over seven months, approaching election to this post, that I will never preside over a cover-up or a whitewash and I remain committed to this pledge.

3. To ensure that the police are available when we need them most.

The core promise of the police to the public is that they are available to us when we need them most; after 999 calls in life-threatening emergencies.

There are three components to ensuring this is the case. The first is the effectiveness of call-handling when it comes to what the police refer to as a "Contact Centre" and what the public more usually refer to as a "Force Control Room." I will work to support enhanced training of our call centre team to ensure that calls are properly graded according to threat and given the correct level of priority. This is a huge level of responsibility and I have seen for myself the dedication of the team who handle our calls in a crisis at Bedfordshire Police.

Our Force has made enormous improvements in its call-handling efficiency in recent years and especially over the past 18 months. I intend to build upon the success of our Control Room. It cannot stay as it is as updating is required. Before my election, the Force entered into an agreement for Hertfordshire to take the lead on Public Contact – or Control Rooms – within the Triforce collaboration of Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire. A plan is in place to move our Control Room staff to either of two bases in Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire, at Welwyn Garden City or Hinchbrook, to allow a fully integrated and modernised Control Room structure, backed by the new Athena IT platform, with calls being handled to a similarly high standard across the three force area. Some £2.3 million worth of public savings will result. I fully appreciate the emotional connection of a Force to its Control Room but two years of collaborative planning have been invested in this move and these public savings are dependent upon it. I will ensure that our staff are kept updated, as has not always been the case in the past, and that we work with them to minimise the disruption this causes. The overall objective must be that the public have a guarantee of the best possible service in a modernised environment which is fit for twenty first century policing.

We also need to ensure that call-handling is conducted in a way that ensures that vital evidence is preserved for efficient crime detection so our public is best-served and I intend that training will be provided with this aspect in mind.

Fast response times are essential to public confidence in the police. When people dial 999 they should only ever do so in a

life-threatening emergency and it is, therefore, imperative that a response arrives as soon as practically possible. Between April 2015 and March 2016 Bedfordshire Police response times for such events – graded by our Force as "Fast Incidents" – improved compared to the previous year by between 1% and 2% with 40.5% of Fast Incidents being attended within 15 minutes. Building on this success is critical to public confidence in Bedfordshire Police and conflicts with an anecdotal belief that such targets are not being achieved. I will hold the Force to account to ensure that we continue to move in this direction of improvement.

The second element is ensuring sufficient police officers are available to respond. This is why a combination of robustly petitioning for more Government funds, with an evidence-based argument, and Project Boost the Frontline, to release as many officers back to frontline service as possible, are so important. In addition, the more services we deliver closely with our partners to ensure our officers are not diverted to handle the responsibilities of others will prove critical: I have mentioned the Mental Health Street Triage car scheme to keep patients out of the criminal justice system and prevent officers from being detained during the sectioning process within the NHS, among many other benefits. If we work more closely with social services and other partners, including highly experienced Domestic Violence workers in a similar way, more officers should be released, more quickly, back to 999 duties and those we are called on to help should also be placed on a pathway to more appropriate care.



Discussing mental health issues with Alistair Burt the Minister with responsibility for Mental Health and Bedfordshire Police's Mental Health lead Chief Insp. Jaki Whittred

The third element is public education: I have mentioned the poor level of awareness of the 101 number. Both in schools, and at every Outreach event delivered to the public by my team, and me we have to explain the correct use of our 999 service and the consequences of both hoax calls and diversion of officers and call-handlers from those in most need. The Fire Service already deliver excellent schools programmes and we need them to reinforce this message too as the demands upon us are so closely linked.

4. Putting victims at the centre of the way we police and prosecute.

I believe that investing in Restorative Justice can offer an enhanced service for victims by giving them some control over the justice process, since becoming the subject of a crime takes such control away. This, in essence, means offering them a chance to make their voice heard.

I intend to achieve this in several ways. First, all victims whose cases go to court should be offered the opportunity, if they wish, to write a letter to the Magistrates or Judge to explain the impact of the crime upon them and what they would see as the suitable punishment. Clearly this process must be managed to ensure that expectations are realistic and this element of preparation for an approaching court case is, in any case, a key component of proper support for a victim, in my view.

Additional Community Remedy Options can also be made available which intend to give victims of low-level crime and anti-social behaviour a say in any out of court punishment of the perpetrator and chance to influence the outcome with a "Community Remedy Document." This document is compiled by the PCC, following agreement with the Chief Constable, and after a process of public consultation. It is therefore my intention to progress such a process and to oversee a public consultation on Community Remedy Options.

Victims should be offered a properly managed chance to communicate with the offender, including meeting them in circumstances where their safety can be assured by a trained facilitator in a secure location. This allows them to have their say directly to assist them in moving forward and recovering from the crime. A dual benefit is reported by the Restorative Justice Council (RJC) who cite multiple examples of offenders who have been rehabilitated after being confronted with the reality of their crimes, by meeting the victim and hearing about the impact of what they have done. The victim has the potential to hear an apology and explanation and to see the reality of the feared criminal, who more often than not may appear more sad, than threateningly bad, as previously anticipated.

As the RJC states: "Supporting victims of crime to recover and move on is a key part of the PCC's role and making restorative justice available is the best way to do it." My task is to review the arrangements we have in place and to ensure they are fit for purpose as part of a comprehensive Restorative Justice Strategy.

I also wish to hold Victims Forums to allow victims of crimes of different types to meet me and my Outreach Team so that, instead of prescribing what we feel they need, we learn directly from victims themselves what they have found most - and least - helpful and to hear feedback on their experience of engaging with our Force in extremis, from the control room to the court.

In our county we have the Bedfordshire Victims Partnership (BVP) comprised of over 20 partner organisations working on both a voluntary and statutory basis with victims to try to improve services and care. BVS's objective is as follows:-

"Our aim is for a joined up, seamless approach so that victims get a better, more reactive, responsive service when they need it and when they want it."

It is my intention to build on this work and to encourage more victims' organisations to join us to create a genuine Victims' Hub to provide information and support and share best practise across the county.

While on ride-along with our officers or observing in the control room, I could not fail to note that the overwhelming majority of our incoming 999 calls at peak times arise from Domestic Violence. I am determined to do all I can to address this matter. This is why I am to ask the Police and Crime Panel to review best practise around the country to inform me as to the most appropriate areas for investment in services and a proven direction for policing to produce the best possible protection for victims, as I move ahead in my term. This is the most cost effective way for me to acquire such evidence-based advice, since the majority of this year's Victim Support and Community Safety Funds have been distributed. I am not prepared to put this vital work on hold. I am fortunate that Bedfordshire Police has recently appointed Dr Jackie Sebire as the new force Head of Crime, Community and Public Protection. Jackie has 23 years' police service, a PhD in forensic psychology and is a nationally recognised expert in tackling domestic abuse. I intend to support her in this vital work.

I have been a long-term supporter of the NSPCC and have pledged to back the charity in the "It's Time" campaign to ensure survivors of child sex abuse receive appropriate therapeutic counselling to allow them to make a recovery and move forward to build complete and happier lives. It is fully my intention to invest in areas such as play therapy for the very young and counselling support of older children and adults. I fully support the counselling services for child abuse victims already receiving funding from the OPCC.

In its report last autumn, the police watchdog HMIC found Bedfordshire Police could do more to protect vulnerable children. I will work with the Chief Constable to ensure that the improvements already embarked on continue and increase, including proper risk assessment of "looked after children" who have a higher than usual tendency to run away from their place of care. We need to be looking below the surface to find out why these children go missing, where they are going and who they are meeting, to prevent a current or future tragedy. Again, this work cannot wait.

Above all we must ensure that crime is not under-reported and, as a consequence un-investigated or victims are entirely failed. Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Honour-based Violence, Female Genital Mutilation and Hate crimes, Rape and many Sexual Assaults are only now being reported to police in significant numbers after a long culture of private shame, silence and intimidation. I will do all that is possible within our budget and policing strength to ensure such matters are treated with the gravity they deserve and properly investigated. It is easy to misunderstand rising recorded crime figures in these areas and to view them as a failure of a Force. The reverse is true since it means our police are, finally, being trusted by victims to reveal these most intimate crimes and to respond appropriately.

Helping victims to cope with the initial aftermath of a crime and, subsequently, assisting them to move forward and recover are key concerns of both Bedfordshire Police and the PCC. The Force aims to become a top ten performer for Victim Satisfaction and

is working to meet victims' expectations around the politeness, empathy and concern shown by officers, the practical advice given, staying in contact, explaining police terminology and being professional at all times. It is moving in the right direction, with the Force's Victim Satisfaction Rating rising 14 places from 40th out of 43 forces to 26th nationally. I am committed to championing the needs and views of victims in Bedfordshire and to working with the Force to improve still further on the current ranking over the next four years.

5. A fair deal on policing wherever you live – in the town or country.

I have met with the National Farmers' Union regularly in the run-up to becoming your PCC. The overall consensus among members seems to be that for too long our countryside has lost out when it comes to tackling crime. Farmers and their neighbours told me that they feel quite literally isolated and, occasionally, in genuine danger when having to face those arriving to commit break-ins, to poach or take part in other illegal activity such as hare-coursing, since police back-up can clearly take longer to arrive than if they lived in the town and closer to the Bedford and Luton 999 response hubs.

Such crime in the country also comes at a cost; the National Rural Crime Survey has estimated that the true cost of rural crime is over £800 million per year nationally with farmers and young families the most frequent victims. The Survey, in 2015, indicated that the average cost of such crimes to a country household is £2,500 and to a rural business over £4000.

In Bedfordshire itself, in six months from September 2015 to March 2016, the Force recorded 101 rural crimes. Nearly half of these were not simply unoccupied farm buildings but rural business premises and stables. The crimes were not clustered in one area, indicating the challenge of responding effectively to crime in the countryside across the county as a whole.

Four years without Community Policing in Bedfordshire has meant that the perception of those in rural neighbourhoods is that thieves have become bolder, stealing large-scale equipment like tractors to ram-raid cash machines and breaking repeatedly into farm buildings to seize tools and stock. Rural communities also have to deal with extensive fly-tipping and vandalism, including arson, for which they are expected to pick up the tab to remove rubbish or pay increased insurance premiums. I have been listening and so has the senior team at Bedfordshire Police.

We will be delivering an improved response to Rural Crime with my backing. A team of rural Village Specials, with full warranted police powers, is being designated to respond to crime in the villages and countryside. They will also operate across the county in "area saturation" policing, arriving without notice at villages and hamlets, policing in the most visible manner possible, to deter criminals and reassure the public.

I will give continued backing to high visibility crime prevention days in the countryside, known as Operation Vision, of the type which took place in Harrold on April 30 2016. This offered a combination of a Drop-in Police Surgery, property marking pens to deter burglars, bicycle-marking and officers to provide general crime prevention advice. The local Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator was also invited to attend to encourage sign-up to the village's schemes.

This would, of course, be an ideal venue to provide details of sign-up to the Beds Alert service which provides a link-up to Bedfordshire Police to pass on details of rural and other crime and receive messages on police progress, of particular benefit in areas which generally are without access to delivered local newspapers.

Beds Alert is the replacement for the former Ringmaster community messaging service and is hosted by the National Neighbourhood Watch Scheme "Our Watch." This has allowed the Force to combine Ringmaster and Neighbourhood Watch contacts to create a consolidated database for the county shared by all Watch schemes as well as the Fire Service. Any one of these organisations can now message sections of the database with relevant information that members sign up for. There are currently over 20,000 members of Beds Alert and my Ambassadors will help me in my aim to recruit more.

Where the countryside is concerned, different issue groups with rural themes have been merged into Beds Alert including Farm Watch and Horse Watch.

A new Rural Liaison Officer (RLO) is now in post and has been tasked with contacting strategic partners in the countryside, including Parish Councils, attending key meetings. The officer will be coordinating police activities in and around the rural areas as part of a road map to achieving stronger partnership working to protect those who live in the countryside and fight crime together. The RLO will also synchronise work done by different police departments such as the Travellers' Liaison Officer, Community Policing teams and PCSOs. This officer is designing a message template to be sent out to all key contacts for a weekly update and report on issues and events in rural communities, by email. There will also be crime prevention advice for farmers, for example encouraging the installation of CCTV and the new alert technology known as Dakota Wireless Alert, which is installed at entrance gates, alerting the farmer when a vehicle is driven down the approach road. Farmers will also be made aware of the CESAR (Construction and Agricultural Equipment Security and Registration Scheme) and TRACKER (agricultural equipment tracking scheme) protections for large-scale plant. The officer will also monitor rural community tensions over movements of the Traveller community and pass on advice regarding illegal settlements and fly-tipping, which is now a civil offence. The RLO will also liaise with farmers who use drones to monitor their crops to consider possibilities for harnessing intelligence about crime on their farmland. Locals will be encouraged to join both Beds Watch and as Special Constables with the latter bringing full policing powers to rural communities. Social media will be used to gather and spread country crime intelligence as well as email for effective communication and networking.

As PCC I will go further to support the rural crime team. I have the backing of the county membership of the National Farmers' Union (NFU) in supplying an extensive network of contacts who really know the countryside and can pass on details of its crime problems, from the ground. I will work with them to create a Rural Crime Intelligence Network of designated contacts for Bedfordshire Police. They will liaise regularly and provide feedback on crime problems, and potential solutions, from the heart of our country community, the real grass roots on crime, as the people who know it best.

I will also make myself available, supported by Bedfordshire Police's Deputy Chief Constable, Mark Collins, who is heading up the Rural Crime Strategy, to meet with them at regular intervals to ensure this works and to gain further feedback on how our improved rural crime initiatives are bringing improvements.

A draft Rural Policing Strategy is being developed and will be provided to stakeholders for consultation. I wish to be part of this consultative process.

Given my requirement for an evidence-based approach to policing, we will assiduously monitor rural crime to measure how these projects are delivering better public satisfaction and crime reduction as we move forward.

In addition, I appreciate the menace that fly-tipping has become throughout the county. I am determined to work with our local authorities to make it easier to dispose of larger-scale household waste, like beds and fridges, and smaller-scale trade waste, such as paint pots and timber off-cuts. If we do not make it easier to dispose of waste in properly designated locations, at council tips, it will inevitably lead to more dumping of refuse, spoiling the Bedfordshire countryside. This, to me, is common-sense.

The urban environment brings different crime challenges and requires other common-sense solutions. I have spent time with our officers on patrol and in the Night Time Economy vans in both Bedford and Luton town centres at weekends, seeing the challenges associated with a busy pubbing and clubbing culture.

By night, the policing needs of these town centres escalate. The High Streets and service roads are lined with pubs and clubs which require a disproportionate level of policing – several vanloads of officers and police on foot, often until 5am, as I have seen for myself. It is not just a question of pubs and clubs creating demand; on Bedford High Street I was told by officers of the late night fast food outlets, which represent such a magnet for policing problems that they employ their own security, yet are still unable to cope without extra police assistance. It has been suggested that such outlets, stay open for a significant time beyond their official licence period, which encourages clubbers to remain in the area until 5am. I cannot permit this extra, and unnecessary, burden on our limited police officers. I will work with the local authorities to ensure such premises close on time, at the hour stipulated by their licences, and release officers to other duties.

No other council taxpayers require this level of demand except football clubs and they contribute to the cost of policing. I am proposing a Night Time Levy to help pay for this as a similar cost of doing business. It only seems fair. But any extra money raised this way must be used in the town centres for this precise purpose. That is also fair to me.

The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 invested this potential power in PCCs working with local authorities:-

"The late night levy ('the levy') will enable licensing authorities to raise a contribution from late-opening alcohol suppliers towards policing the night-time economy. It will be a local power that licensing authorities can choose whether or not to exercise. It must cover the whole of the licensing authority's area. However, the licensing authority will also choose the period during which the levy applies every night, between midnight and 6am, and

decide what exemptions and reductions should apply from a list set out in regulations."

In other words, it is quite possible for the local authorities in both Bedford and Luton to stipulate that only those premises open after a certain time, such as 1am would pay the levy. I intend to enter into early discussion with them concerning the levy possibilities.

Some of our licensees have complained to me over the ways we police their businesses. If they pay they will have a say – through a forum to meet regularly with Bedfordshire Police to discuss their concerns.

My team will work to establish the practicality of a Night-time Levy scheme. The cost of recovering these fees and the ring-fencing of such funds for the stated purpose of town centre policing must be firmly established before proceeding.

6. Protecting the police to protect the public with a proper duty of care.

Our police officers do a tough job. Most answer 999 calls alone with little idea of the dangers which lie behind every door. They have faced years of uncertainty, scrutiny and re-organisation. I have already stated that I am determined to work to boost morale and back a shift system they can rely on to live a life outside their crucial public service. I intend to look after them so they can look after you.

Currently the vast majority of our officers attending 999 calls, even late at night and in the early hours of the morning in urban areas known to have higher levels of violent crime, do so entirely alone.

Bedfordshire Police have been moving away from double-crewing and towards single-crewing, to make their limited frontline staff go further in terms of available response cars. The exceptions are where a student officer is being accompanied by a tutor officer or a specific threat or operation requires double-crewing. The Chief Constable has already supported a move to a double-crewed vehicle on each shift and stresses that where the Control Room staff consider, through risk assessment, that two units or more should be deployed, this should be done. The overall move to single-crewing is, however, deeply unpopular with the vast majority of frontline officers with whom I have spoken and has been cited to me repeatedly as the reason why officers have left this Force and others, especially by WPCs.

They make an argument that it fails both the lone police officer and the member of the public who calls them to a violent event, if they are unable to fully control the incident on their own. This single-crewing is a particular consequence of the lower numbers of officers in Bedfordshire in relation to the size of the general population and of the funding formula which, in the past, has not recognised Bedfordshire's urban as well as rural requirements. I will, of course, robustly make our case for funding to support higher numbers of officers and Project Boost the Frontline is designed specifically to release as many of those we already employ as possible to support their colleagues in this, often dangerous, work.

I am keenly aware that when our officers call for back-up it can be an unacceptably long wait, unlike the position in London where Metropolitan Police officers report their back-up arrives in only a few minutes.

The Project Boost the Frontline team is already examining anecdotal evidence to establish the facts suggesting that, even where our frontline staff are deployed in small numbers, those Sections involved in vehicles carrying more than one officer are more productive, potentially as officers have the confidence to support one another in actions they would not be prepared to attempt alone.

I want to work to reduce single-crewing where possible giving priority to this in key periods such as late at night and in the early hours at weekends. I see this as a duty of care to our officers and part of holding the Force to account.

I am entirely prepared to explore a variety of potential solutions to provide accompanying individuals, where insufficient police are available to double-crew. Clearly such individuals must come from an appropriate and disciplined background to operate as part of such a "buddy" scheme and the views of police officers themselves are paramount and must be sought through a full consultation process. The rules of engagement and insurance for any such scheme are also of critical importance.

The solutions may include working with the Fire Service – since this is the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service with potential to provide support to both police officers and the public. A precedent for joint working between the blue lights already exists since the Fire Service in Bedfordshire has already forged close links with the East of England ambulance service and, as of the week of May 9 2016, has started a joint initiative from its Control to dispatch either service in a health emergency, on the basis of whichever is nearer, for example.

Another option is to approach retired police officers as Specials specifically tasked with a buddy scheme to help younger colleagues, who could also learn from their experience.

In addition, my work with the Cabinet Office's Emergency Planning College for eight years included training the army for what is known as Military Aid to the Civilian Authorities, in other words helping the police in exceptional circumstances such as public emergencies. I know of no opportunity for military police or officers to gain experience of working within a civilian environment to prepare them for such deployment. If the solutions above prove unworkable, it may prove possible to explore the option of offering such experience by accompanying our officers late at night and in the early hours of the morning, at weekends, in some of our more demanding urban areas for crime. Naturally there is no suggestion whatever that they would be armed. We have our own firearms officers for the circumstances which require such deployment.

7. Genuinely being a Commissioner for all Communities.

I made a commitment which I stand by to every single community I visited during the run-up to the PCC election, that equality to me means that no one community should receive less policing than others, even if I cannot guarantee more officers in neighbourhoods at all times, and that all crime should be investigated to a consistently high standard, whoever you are and wherever you live.

One core element of responsibility for the PCC is to be the voice of the public when it comes to policing and to deliver this

effectively I need to work in person, and through my office, with our diverse communities to build genuine relationships and a strong bond of trust.

Accordingly, I wish to regularly visit representatives of different faith groups, such as the mosque Presidents, as I have started to do over the past seven months. I want to work closely with these leaders and their Outreach Committees to engage in consultation to genuinely protect the young from radicalisation and to ensure the security of mosque buildings and that of the worshippers who use them. For example, I need their help to spread the news of the change in law, introduced on April 1 2016, requiring a person's faith to be recorded if they report a physical or verbal assault to the police. This is designed to ensure that Islamophobia (and any other religious hate crime, such as Anti-Semitism) cannot operate "under the radar." Similarly, I am assured by Lord Ahmad, the Home Office Minister with responsibility for anti-radicalisation projects and mosque security, that money is available to directly assist with the funding of such work.

To dispel ignorance and build further trust, I want our new police recruits to receive information about different religions from local faith leaders themselves, in their own environments. Naturally, there will be representatives of most faiths within our county and no prejudice whatever is intended by excluding any religious group here but it is true to say that the three largest faith groups in Bedfordshire are Christian, Muslim and Sikh.



Fundraising with the Queen's Park Gurdwara

I have already talked informally to leaders of the Sikh gurdwaras of Bedford (Kempston and Queen's Park) as well as to the Mosques of Luton (at Bury Park's Jame Masjid and Jalalabad mosques) about the possibility of engaging with Bedfordshire Police to deliver training to recruits. The suggestion has been greeted with universal enthusiasm. It can only build bridges for future police officers to visit gurdwaras, mosques, and Christian churches and gain a real awareness of what takes place there, as well as forming new friendships, as I have. I also want to see such visits built into the duties of our existing officers, across the force in future.

It is a key aim of the Chief Constable, Jon Boutcher, to further boost the diversity of Bedfordshire Police and I support him in this aim. We both understand that a police force must look and sound like the community it serves to have its full confidence. There are also real practical benefits to diversity including language skills to deliver policing to those residents who do not speak English as a first language. I will work to deliver a targeted

recruitment programme, alongside faith and community leaders, to this end. We will be seeking both full-time officers and Special Constables, with full warranted powers, through this programme.

Bedfordshire has been making improvements in this area since 2012 but a faster pace of change is required. The Black and Minority Ethnic Population of the county is 23% but only 6% of officers, 7% of Specials and 10% of PCSOs are of BME origin.

We cannot guarantee, of course, that every single one of these applicants will be accepted into one of the most demanding professional roles in existence. All communities, irrespective of diversity, require us to select high quality candidates who are entirely suitable for the job and I believe any suggestion of tokenism would only undermine the credibility of those who join us and of those excellent officers from diverse communities who already work with us as a highly valued part of the existing team. We will always choose the best but our recruitment process must ensure that no inadvertent discrimination against any candidate whatever is present. For this I want Bedfordshire Police to work with our independent Scrutiny Committee members, and others with relevant backgrounds, to review recruitment materials and processes to this end.

I have to go further to be a genuine Commissioner for all. During a meeting with Afro-Caribbean community leaders and spokespeople in Luton on April 27 2016, a comment from a midwife gave me food for thought. She said: "Working as a midwife in London I don't expect a black midwife to be provided for every black mother or an Asian, White, Turkish, Greek or other midwife to be provided for others, depending on their background. What is more important is that the person doing the job behaves in an appropriate and professional way at all times."

The meeting exposed a level of distrust which appears to indicate a fault-line in at least part of this community's confidence in the police and the comments made represented a venting of anger and anxiety which caused me deep concern. I am to work with the community to get to the bottom of this and to establish both the history and the current facts of the position. We cannot have any single community within the county which invests less trust in the police than others and I have already stated my clear commitment to building confidence in our Force in all residents.

As a result this issue has already been raised with the Chief Constable who has offered his personal assistance to work with me, and this part of the community, to establish the nature of this apparent divide and ways to remedy it.

I believe the on-going use of Body Worn Video, and the way it is employed by Bedfordshire Police, should represent a way forward both to reassure all communities that police officers will behave in an appropriate and professional manner at all times and also to protect officers from inaccurate allegations. A Bedfordshire officer is required to switch on the camera on arrival at the scene and immediately he or she understands that the incident will need to be recorded in a pocket book as follows:

"The user should (also) be mindful (of) the potential impact of not recording an incident on the Force's reputation. It is evidentially important to record as much of an incident as possible therefore recording should begin at the earliest opportunity at the start of an incident. Users should therefore commence recording upon arrival at the scene of an incident (and/or) as soon as the user becomes aware that any encounter is likely to be the subject of a pocket note book entry."



Bedford's iconic bridge

This means that any time an officer comes into contact with a member of the public the camera should be on unless a specific decision not to turn it on has been made, for example in certain intelligence-gathering situations where members of the public are passing on information.

The rules are strict:

"If an incident is not recorded, the user's rationale must be captured in their pocket note book. The user must be mindful that failing to record incidents that are evidential is likely to require explanation in court."

(This policy was approved by the police's independent advisory groups before it went live.)

However, the operational use of Body Worn Video "must be proportionate, legitimate and necessary" (to comply with the Human Rights Act 1998, Data Protection Act 1998 and Surveillance Camera Code of Practice.) The College of Policing guidance confirms this, stating: "Continuous, non-specific recording is not permitted." In other words, the camera cannot be permanently on.

There is an argument for taking the decision out of an officer's hands, but the majority of police calls are for non-criminal matters and in such cases it might not be appropriate or helpful for officers to record an interaction with a vulnerable person or child, for example.

There is no reason, however, why a member of the public should not be able to ask for an officer to switch the camera on or to enquire if his or her camera is in use and no insult should be inferred by this reasonable request.

Many of those attending the meeting to which I have referred were unaware of the implementation of Body Worn Video or the Bedfordshire Force policy relating to its use and it will be a public information task for me and my Outreach Team to spread the word about this to build public confidence in the process.

8. Working with partners to break the cycle of serial offending and to prevent crime where possible.

A clear direction of travel is emerging in policing to make money work across the public purse and to ensure properly joined-up information sharing, working to identify problems before they emerge, and to manage those already presenting a challenge to the criminal justice system and other areas of the public sector.

A key element is the creation of crime-fighting and safe-guarding hubs including agencies who have not traditionally worked closely together: this means the police working closely to share information and plan action with social care and housing officers from local authorities, their environmental health, planning and licensing departments, the NHS - both at GP level and from hospitals, especially in A&E and Mental Health - and other public sector agencies including the tax services HMRC and DVLA, the Department of Work and Pensions and the Probation Service. This is a model created in Greater Manchester in the aftermath of the shooting of WPCs Nicola Hughes and Fiona Bone.

The Chief Constable and the Chief Executive of Luton Borough Council, Trevor Holden, are shortly to visit Manchester to see, at first hand, examples of joint working with local authority services which might apply to assist in Luton.

Working as part of the hub, all these agencies create joint plans to tackle crime and safeguard the vulnerable since it is true to say that the same individuals who require significant police resources are very often those who, simultaneously, represent similar challenges for some or all of these other partner agencies.

There have been so many criticisms of failures to work collectively which have ended in tragic consequences, such as in the aftermath of a child's death or the murder of a partner, that I intend police to work in such a hub in Bedfordshire and ensure that it is not just a talking shop but a real catalyst for positive action to prevent and contain crime and harm.

The priority for the hub must be the protection of the most vulnerable, especially children, since Bedfordshire Police was criticised as requiring improvement by the policing watchdog HMIC when it came to its protection of the vulnerable, especially "looked after children." I particularly want the hub to arrange focussed joint-working at times of peak need, such as Fridays and weekends when such children are more likely to run away.

We need those working in the area of sexual violence, including rape and domestic abuse, to share information within the hub so that we can intervene at an earlier stage, once potential danger has been identified, to prevent further harm and protect the vulnerable in terms of both victims and children.

In terms of crime prevention, I wish to further develop our Integrated Offender Management Programme in Bedfordshire which aims to make a real difference in the prevention of further offending.

The Integrated Offender Management (IOM) scheme is a response to crime and re-offending which also depends on a cross-agency response. Partner agencies identify the most problematic habitual offenders and work together to manage individual cases since the most efficient way of protecting the public and fighting crime is clearly to prevent it from

happening in the first place. It depends on all partners working together to produce a local response to local problems with offenders having to face up to their responsibility or face the consequences.

The scheme in this county means staff from a range of organisations are based together in a single location in Luton and Bedford as part of multi-disciplinary teams. I see this as preferable to many such schemes nationally which have not embraced co-location or inter-agency management as this must lead to closer working in practice. Bedfordshire IOM is also distinguished by having the Probation Trust, rather than the police, as its strategic lead agency.

Our IOM programmes are:

- **Prolific and Other Priority Offenders (PPO) rehabilitation and enforcement package for repeat serious acquisitive criminals (eg burglars and those who commit robbery)**
- **High Volume Offenders (HVO) rehabilitation package for high volume, low level offenders (eg shoplifters)**
- **Prolific and Other Priority Offenders (PPO) intensive community based punishment and rehabilitation package for non-violent serious acquisitive criminals who would otherwise receive a prison sentence. To qualify these offenders must demonstrate that they are ready to change their lives and admit their full criminal history.**

The IOM programme is being extended, supporting my commitment to dealing effectively with Domestic Abuse, to include high-risk Domestic Abuse perpetrators. This is a new move, given the very high levels of demand related to Domestic Abuse in our county and the risks to the victims. It is right that we target this within our IOM programme given that Domestic Abuse is the highest cause of homicide within the UK.

The IOM programme as a whole allows us to reach those individuals who are in the minority in the community but who create the majority of crime. Some of them commit offences for personal gain, others as they are struggling to cope with aspects of their lives such as drug and alcohol abuse which creates a cycle of demand fed only by repeated criminal behaviour.

Either way, work needs to be done to break this cycle and I will pursue successful intervention through both IOM and my commissioning activities while leading the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Other opportunities for joint working with local authorities exist to help control and prevent crime. In approaching the problems caused by alcohol sales in our towns, the police also need to work more closely with local authorities' licensing departments than previously to examine the likely demands on policing that a new premises might create since it is wasteful to, retrospectively, discover a drain on such resources that early intervention might have prevented. This is, for example, the thinking behind Bedford's Midland Road "Cumulative Impact Plan" considering the joint effects of licensed premises and those which retail alcohol when considering further license applications.

In planning too, police have been less involved than is desirable in the planning of new developments - both in the public and private sector - in the past. They have the expertise to advise to ensure the designing out of crime such as blind alleys and

hideaway corners with poor visibility which could attract undesirable behaviour when it comes to creating new estates and leisure areas.

Collaboration with the Fire Service

Emergency services play an essential part in serving our communities and keeping them safe. While police, fire and ambulance services all have distinct frontline duties and roles it is clear that close collaboration between them can deliver distinct benefits for the public.

The Government has made its commitment clear to supporting collaborative and innovative blue light working and has invested over £80 million in such projects since 2013. However further opportunities exist.

The Prime Minister's announcement, on January 5 2016, that responsibility for fire and rescue policy has transferred to the Home Office from the Department for Communities and Local Government demonstrates the path forward to closer working. This provides an excellent opportunity for sharing good practise to deliver better outcomes for the public and make savings, from the sharing of the back office functions like HR to joint-use of buildings.

New legislation will enable PCCs to take on the functions of fire and rescue authorities where a local case is made which could create a single employer for police and fire personnel. Our vision is to explore and exploit every possible opportunity from collaboration, in which case little advantage would be gained from full combination.

In January 2016 a Bedfordshire bid to the Police Innovation Fund for joint working with the Fire and Rescue Service was unsuccessful but I am determined to explore the prospects for this partnership.



Addressing Ampthill Town Council

Both Police and Fire are now actively considering the joint Estate – looking at opportunities to potentially share sites where possible. Currently there are no shared estates between the services in Bedfordshire, leading to costly duplication of public buildings in some areas, with both a fire and police station. In others, as previously mentioned, a police station has been closed but the possibility of a policing base is now available

by sharing fire premises. For example, the future of the under-occupied Leighton Buzzard station has been discussed for over a decade yet the town has a fire station. Other locations where fire services remain yet police stations have closed include Ampthill, Sandy, Shefford and Harrold. We already pay for these buildings from the public purse and where Community Policing Hubs require a base, even temporarily, it seems sensible to look to sharing facilities like these rather than duplicating buildings. The paramedic service often do so already, on both a formal and informal basis, and I trust the Fire Brigades' Union will appreciate that, where several blue lights share the same facility, its future is correspondingly more secure.

The Fire Service has been exceptionally successful in driving down the incidence of fires, particularly through the introduction of smoke alarms. There is some spare capacity in the service, therefore, to assist its partner agency - the Police - especially in spreading a community safety message, including crime prevention and correct use of the 999 and 101 numbers. The two services are looking at the benefits of combined Crime Prevention and Community Protection Teams in multi-service vehicles, delivering community fire safety and crime prevention advice. Recent analysis, for example, shows demand patterns for both services are often very similar. For example, the long-term arson statistics from the Bedford Fire and Rescue Service match the long-term burglary trend in Houghton Regis. Combined teams would ensure a more efficient, streamlined service for the public and, arguably, better protection for each community.

There are some elements of operational work which fire and police personnel could share. The Fire Service could attend incidents to force entry, in the case of a medical emergency, for example, as they are equipped to do so. They could assist in the search for vulnerable missing people to better protect the public.

Fire and Police frequently respond together to 999 life-threatening emergencies but there are occasions when multiple vehicles are not required when the scene is assessed, on arrival. It seems particularly sensible, therefore, to consider a joint approach already introduced over the border in Northamptonshire, where a jointly staffed Fire and Police vehicle is dispatched to traffic accidents to assess what is actually required.

Genuine opportunities exist for joint-working between the Police and Fire services here in Bedfordshire and, at the top of both blue light services, there is a real will to make this work for the benefit of the people of this county with a Memorandum of Understanding exchanged between the services. There are more than 10 different work-streams for joint-working under consideration by a joint Steering Group, chaired by both service Deputy Chiefs, which I wish to support and attend.

In the long term there is the possibility, which common-sense dictates must be investigated, relating to a joint police and fire headquarters to create a Police, Fire and Rescue response facility for the county. Given the intense pressure on Bedfordshire Police funding, this could only proceed if the two existing headquarters could be sold in such a way that such a facility could be paid for from the joint proceeds, releasing funds for further frontline police staff, given the level of demand. Savings based on our inefficient, badly-insulated headquarters could produce a drop

in revenue spending to this end, for example. I will not be building a new HQ if frontline policing does not receive a boost as a result. From my early meetings with them, the leadership at Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue have indicated every commitment to support this vision for strong and effective collaboration between Fire and Police.

I want to explore all such opportunities for joint working and sharing our facilities. This should not be limited to work with Fire. For example, we have a new police facility in Flitwick, directly alongside the station and rail line. I want to explore whether British Transport Police might become involved in regular policing of the line from St Pancras into Bedfordshire, especially on the peak Friday and Saturday nights, and would like to use this facility as a base.

The ambulance service is already working with Bedfordshire Police within the Mental Health Street Triage Programme. I understand there is a willingness to discuss the placement of enquiries offices within certain facilities too, such as Leighton Buzzard.

New Crime Challenges

Traditional - so-called "volume" crime - like burglary and car-taking are on the decrease (partly because of police successes and partly because they have been designed out, via higher security windows and doors together with better car ignition and radio protection systems.) But at the very same time a new generation of crime challenges is emerging. These must be anticipated and planned for. Broadly speaking these crimes take place behind closed doors, often in the home, rather than out on the streets. This makes them considerably harder to police as they are far less visible.

Historic Child Sexual Abuse

These include Child Sexual Abuse in a culture where increasing access to support and information is, thankfully, encouraging victims to come forward. Changing social attitudes also mean those abused in the past are increasingly likely to report historic abuse and the elephant in the room is the unknown cost it will take to resource these investigations which are correspondingly more difficult given the passage of time since, clearly, there can be no cut-off date which allows an offender to escape investigation.

In my own experience of covering such matters, reporting the courts and interviewing victims, it is clear that many perpetrators are serial offenders and career paedophiles who continue to abuse across the decades. Failing to investigate an historic allegation may well condemn a child to abuse today and others tomorrow. As your PCC I am committed to offer the fullest possible support within our budget to victims, recent and historic, to bring their abusers to justice wherever possible and to offer assistance to allow them to move on as survivors of abuse to build whole lives.

Mobile phone crime – Revenge Pornography

Looking ahead to anticipate new technology-based crime is also vital. I am aware of criticism levelled at the police in the past that they had not foreseen the impact of mobile phone technology,

for example. Real evidential issues still surround access to call data at the time of writing. There are two miles of data on a single iPhone which indicates the significant policing issues around handling such evidence.

More recently mobile phones have been used to harass victims by posting sexually explicit pictures once relationships have ended. The latter is now the subject of brand new legislation which requires enforcement. Revenge Porn carries a maximum penalty of two years' imprisonment. It is defined as publishing sexually explicit images of someone who has not given consent for such pictures or video to be shared with others. Disclosing a "private sexual photograph or film" without such consent and with the intention of causing distress is now illegal. It does not matter that the victim originally gave consent to be in the image in the context of an earlier relationship or encounter because, at this point, they did not consent to it being made public or shared with others. This is not a trivial matter. There have been examples of suicides of young people, in particular, who could not face the shame associated with such public humiliation.

The practise is widespread. One US study by McAfee reported that 36% of people have sent or intend to send intimate images to their partners, and one in ten former partners have threatened to expose explicit images online, with more than half - 60% - proceeding to do so. The inescapable conclusion is that this has evolved to become part of our modern sexual relationship culture as a common practice. Furthermore, the problem is far wider than that of a single victim and perpetrator. So-called online "trolls" share the images of strangers to embarrass them further. According to The Daily Telegraph (April 15 2016, the first day of the UK legislation) there are also multiple websites which earn money from sharing revenge pornography which increases demand.

Cybercrime

This is just one example of why I must invest further in our Cybercrime Unit which deals with cases from this type of bullying and harassment by former partners and anonymous "trolls" to child sexual grooming online and fraud.

It is entirely true to say that every one of us is more likely to become a victim of technology-based Cybercrime in the next four years than of any other type of threat. The simple purchase of so-called "malware" can allow fraudsters to access computer after computer, this is linked with phishing emails which fraudulently demand for personal financial data of which 23 in a million are successful according to Det. Supt. Jon Gilbert, who heads up Bedfordshire Police's Cybercrime Hub. Det. Supt. Gilbert has built up a specialist unit at Bedfordshire Police which is recognised by the College of Policing as a centre of excellence since all relevant officers have been trained in basic evidence gathering and to give advice to victims of Cybercrime, 140 have received more detailed training and a specialist team has been developed to attend crime scenes where necessary to remove computer and other IT equipment in such a way that the evidence is preserved.



Discussing Cybercrime with Det Supt Jon Gilbert

I need to support the Cyber Hub further, as PCC, in this growing area of risk. I will support a Cyber Security Advisor to work with partners in organisations like the Chamber of Commerce, small business organisations, the Economic and Business Development Managers in councils, universities and charities (as the housebound are much more likely to be IT dependant and more likely to become victims.)

This advisor also needs to work with academics within the Cyber Hub. Bedfordshire Police are working with the University of Bedfordshire's National Centre of Cyber Stalking Research and have submitted a £2.1m project to the Home Office Police Innovation Fund to fund a study to identify the threat, harm and risk presented by those who start "trolling" online to identify what may prove the trigger for higher-level crime and who is at most risk. The research also wants to identify the lower risk person who does not act the same way in real life as they do behind a keyboard. It is believed that many will not offend again if offered Restorative Justice options attending mandatory social media training to make them aware of the damage their behaviour does. The study will provide the necessary evidence to see if this is the case. There will be focus groups with both victims and offenders supported by Greater Manchester Police and Dyfed Powys to test findings in urban and rural areas

I will support a Schools Advisor, working with parents and children as young as 11, to provide advice on cyber security and prevention of stalking online. Ofsted, the schools' inspectorate body, has made this their number one required project, working with the police, given the level of potential risk.

Bedfordshire Police's Cybercrime Unit has proved forward-looking in its willingness to work with young talent to enhance the protection it can offer to businesses and the wider public. The University of Bedfordshire has provided students to work alongside the police, for example, to clean up servers and get them back into operation after one fraud attack where a company's entire phone system was hijacked and transferred to premium foreign call lines.

We can go further, as the larger corporates like IBM do, in setting tasks and competitions for emerging young IT talents to hack

into systems to inform detectives about new threats or to design apps to protect systems from attack. I believe they will be happy to participate and to earn a testimonial for their fledgling CVs as a result.

Stalking

The sharing of personal information through social media, including relationship status, may have increased the general threat of stalking. According to recent research by Suzy Lamplugh Trust, national figures suggest up to one in five women and one in twelve men in Bedfordshire may experience stalking at some point in their lives. This can clearly have both an emotional and psychological impact on victims which can last for years, even if no violence results.

The Trust's research shows that one in ten victims of stalking end up moving house to get away from their stalker and 30-40% of stalking cases are estimated to involve violence. Stalking is recognised as a risk factor in homicide, particularly domestic homicide. However, in the view of the charity, the local response to stalking victims in Bedfordshire suggests that this crime may be being under-reported here.

A report published by Suzy Lamplugh Trust in April 2016 - *Out of Sight, Out of Mind* - has drawn attention to the low numbers of police recorded stalking crimes as well as the under-investment in services for stalking victims by previous Police and Crime Commissioners on a local basis. In Bedfordshire, it suggested only 179 crimes of stalking were recorded by the police between 1st April 2013 and 4th February 2016. Given the high prevalence of stalking identified by both the Crime Survey for England and Wales and the research launched by the Trust, this figure causes me concern. The Trust says the following, although there is no suggestion that our Force is specifically described:-

"From our experience of operating the National Stalking Helpline, victims regularly report that that when they do go to the police, the response is often disappointing. Our research has found that 43% of victims who had reported found the police response either not very helpful or not helpful at all."

I have agreed to the following as a result, to work to ensure that all police officers and relevant civilian staff get the training they need to recognise stalking when a victim reports it to them - and to record it accurately when they do.

I want to assign resources to commission specialist services for stalking victims so that they have the support to cope with the trauma that stalking causes.

I will also work for a joined-up approach with local partners to ensure that anyone participating in a domestic homicide review, for example, has the training they need to recognise stalking when it has featured in the lead-up to the murder and, of course, to aim to ensure that our partner organisations draw police attention to such problems arising from their own case reviews long before we reach such a tragic conclusion (as the multi-agency hub will always aim to do).

Anti-radicalisation

There is ample evidence of the distaste felt by the overwhelming majority of our county's Muslim population towards the

murderous and discriminatory practises of Isis (also known as Da-esh and Isil) in Syria and Iraq and for the so-called Islamic State or Caliphate. For example, Youtube footage shows members of Luton's Bury Park community – part of Luton's 50,000 strong Muslim population – angrily urging supporters of radical Islamic group Al-Muhajiroun (ALM), who follow banned London hate preacher Anjem Choudary, to leave the town when they attempted to speak to passers-by in Dunstable Road.

It would be foolish, however, to believe that nobody is attracted to the radical message. Not all are able to resist online attempts to recruit foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq and to instil a message of hatred to inspire others to attack members of the military service within Britain or to turn on the wider public in the manner of the recent attacks in Paris and Brussels.

It is clear that the young, in particular, must be protected from such brain-washing. Immediately before the Police and Crime Commissioner election, Lord Tariq Ahmad, the Home Office Minister with responsibility for anti-radicalisation, visited Bury Park in Luton with me. I have pledged to work with him, and local mosques, to identify or create suitable youth schemes to promote a healthier message to counter that which represents such a threat to the harmonious decades of multi-faith living in Luton which their parents and grandparents have done so much to create and promote. This would create positive precedents for expansion of successful anti-radicalisation schemes elsewhere in the country, where a similar threat exists. Such schemes should not be imposed on the community but constructed in genuine partnership with those within it.



With Lord Ahmad in Bury Park

Bedfordshire Police is ideally positioned to deliver this work; it initiated the "Let's Talk About It" online programme which has now been rolled-out more widely, given its down to earth and common-sense approach. This provides information ranging from how to spot a young person is being radicalised to advising the young on how to make sure the money they give to charity goes to a source they are happy to support.

<http://www.ltai.info/>

The programme is part of Prevent, one of the key elements of the Government's "Contest" Counter Terrorism strategy, which aims to stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorist activities and to challenge extremist views. (The other three elements of the strategy are Pursue - to stop attacks -

Protect - to strengthen our protection against them and Prepare - to lessen the impact of an attack when it occurs.)

The whole point of Prevent is not to criminalise but to help and support those who are most at risk of radicalisation, working with community, education, faith, medical and mental health, criminal justice and other agencies and colleagues in other police forces. It aims to identify those who are most vulnerable to being radicalised and to take action first to divert them before any offences are committed.

I am determined that we will do more to support our young people and and protect them from radicalisation in this way.

The regular meetings I plan to have with the Presidents of the Luton Mosque Presidents to build a foundation of trust can only assist with this aim.

The Migrant Crisis

Bedfordshire Police is already dealing with the results of illegal migration, with, sadly, regular discoveries of those being trafficked in the back of lorries, often at service stations or other stopping points on the M1 motorway or main roads.

The refugee crisis is a modern tragedy and we cannot ignore the fact that many of those who are part of the flow from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan are fleeing in fear of their lives and are not economic migrants in any sense. However, the evidence of the Paris terror attacks in 2015, and those in Belgium in 2016, suggests others may be hiding among the desperate to infiltrate our countries and perpetrate acts of terror on arrival. We must establish the identity of those who travel here to prove who they are and that they mean us no harm. This is not hard-hearted, it is common-sense.

The Government is committed to accepting migrants from the refugee camps, most recently accepting unaccompanied children, and they must be made welcome when they get here as they have suffered appallingly and many have youngsters who need to be assimilated into our schools. The entire migrant community will need help with accommodation and to learn our language to be able to have better prospects in future. We must not create a ghetto but integrate.

Police officers will need to be trained to understand this issue and the terror these people leave behind them. This is especially important since the past experiences of these new arrivals may have left them with a fundamental distrust of police.

The crisis is yet another driver of multi-agency hub working as it will be for Bedfordshire Police to work with housing, education, social care and employment services in a fully joined-up way to bring this about.

Human Trafficking and Modern Day Slavery

Desperation will always be exploited by criminals wherever there is an opportunity to make money. This is true of those who take payment to arrange illegal migration and also of those who seek to exploit migrants on arrival here through low-paid or unpaid work or even worse outcomes, such as enforced prostitution. Our Force must work assiduously to disrupt and prevent such criminal activity.

A key component of joint working here in Bedfordshire is our activity with the Housing Departments of our local authorities

who are often the first to pick up information of those living in overcrowded and poor conditions, "under the radar", where Modern Day Slavery often occurs.

As Commissioner, I need to spread the message to the public concerning the need for vigilance and what signs to look for which suggest such practices are taking place in the areas where they live. Above all, the public must be given confidence to report misgivings to the police and reassurance that they will be taken seriously when they do.

Honour-based Crimes, Female Genital Mutilation and Enforced Marriage

I will not allow political-correctness to prevent the investigation of such matters. It is indisputably true that there are practices which have been brought to the UK from other countries and cultures which are illegal here, including the intimidation and violence against women and girls represented by Honour-based Crimes, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Enforced Marriage. Bedfordshire Police has a strong record in this area, having brought the first prosecution for FGM, for example. Our committed officers in the field face tremendous difficulties and challenges in helping women to find permanent refuge from violence and enforced marriage because of the overwhelming demand on places of safety. I will work as Commissioner to assist them in every way I can, through funding where possible and working with local authority and charitable partners, which is why I have made the provision of extra refuge places a priority in my first commissioning and grant process.

I also need to work with our schools and colleges to spread the message that such matters are intolerable crimes and that no girls and women should face them in silence and without a guarantee of police assistance.

On-going Challenges

Serious Organised Crime

Ever closer working at regional level across the East will prove necessary to counter the challenges of dealing effectively with the serious threats which Counter Terror, Human Trafficking and Slavery, Drug Dealing, Weapons Crimes, Robbery and other Serious Organised Crime represent. This is particularly true since investigation and prosecution of such offences tend to follow lengthy - and expensive - surveillance.

I will ensure the police work to share information across the entire East of England, as well as among the 3 neighbouring forces of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire, to assist. This is one reason driving the introduction of the Athena information-sharing IT platform.

Similarly, our Force is fully committed to working with the National Crime Agency and to playing its part in full within ERSOU, the Eastern Region Special Operations Unit. Indeed, especially in the investigation of Counter Terror, we have provided exceptional input (while arguing for full funding of any and all significantly extended CT operational activity to prevent the depletion of other funds for the Unit's overall remit.) We cannot continue to be expected to provide greater numbers of officers than our collaborative partners from Cambridgeshire

and Hertfordshire, however, as this will have an inevitably detrimental impact on our own frontline policing in the county.

Luton Airport

A different area of challenge for Bedfordshire Police is Luton Airport. At the point of becoming your Commissioner, negotiations are being concluded to set the budget for our force to continue to oversee security at this key regional transport hub, at a time when it is growing exponentially. It is growing to the point where it will handle some 18 million passengers, putting it on a par with Stansted. Expansion of the main airport buildings is underway, a new over-ground passenger transfer service linking the Luton Airport Parkway railway station with the terminal is planned and the airport wishes to develop adjacent land as an industrial park, widely extending the parameter.

The deal we struck to police the airport last time was not fit for purpose. It lost money, where Bedfordshire Police are concerned, which means the taxpayers of Bedfordshire have been, in effect, subsidising the airport operation. In brief, the deal covered the expenses of officers policing Luton Airport itself, but failed to cover the considerable additional cost of processing those wanted by other forces, especially the Metropolitan Police. Some 33% of those stopped at arrival or boarding gates are sought by the Metropolitan Police. Our officers were lost to other duties while transferring them to Luton Police Station and during the, often lengthy, process of formally booking them into police custody at Luton Police Station. This was unacceptable, unsustainable and commercially unviable for our force.

We cannot make a profit out of the policing of the airport but we should certainly not be making a loss and any settlement must reflect this.

The simple business requirement is that Bedfordshire Police must receive full cost recovery for the policing of the airport. Recent events in Brussels should remind us all of the need for a safe and secure airport facility.

The airport represents an on-going crime challenge, beyond immigration issues, from drug-smuggling to wildlife crime (meaning, in this context, the importation of live animals and banned animal materials such as ivory.) I am committed to providing the resources to deal with such crimes.

Wildlife Crime

According to the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), Wildlife crime takes a variety of forms in the UK including:

- **Smuggling live animals and body parts such as ivory and rhino horn through ports of entry contrary to COTES (Control of Trade in Endangered Species) regulations.**
- **Hare coursing (which is banned under The Hunting Act 2004.) A problem reported to me via The National Farmers' Union across this county.**
- **Persecution of birds of prey.**
- **Badger-baiting, snaring and sett disturbance (with such badgers frequently left by the highway to simulate road deaths.)**
- **Poaching of deer and fish, increasingly on a commercial scale.**

We are a largely rural county and such crimes, therefore, matter within country communities, in particular. Across the whole of the UK, the National Wildlife Crime Unit provides specialist knowledge to assist in the prevention and detection of such crime, acting against criminals exploiting British wildlife and international traders using UK ports of entry illegally.



Finding out the facts about crime in rural Bedfordshire

These are matters which our officers must be made aware of and trained to identify, with knowledge of how to appropriately liaise with the Unit where necessary together to lead to successfully prosecutions. Both our Airport and Rural Crime teams must be made particularly aware of such matters and how to deal with them. I am looking to the IFAW to assist with this.

How to help the Police to help the Public

We have long-established schemes in Bedfordshire in which our residents recognize that the Force requires their active assistance to manage local, community policing and collect intelligence at neighbourhood level. One of the first visits I made as a candidate for the PCC role was to Marston Moretaine, where residents have a 23-year history of involvement in such schemes, including Streetwatch (a wider Neighbourhood Watch type of voluntary intelligence-gathering project, covering several streets at a time, providing visible reassurance and liaising with local police) to Speedwatch, where Bedfordshire Police offer training, high visibility clothing and speed-monitoring equipment to allow residents to stage traffic patrols to indicate where limits are being exceeded. I wish to extend participation in such schemes, particularly within our diverse communities where I see less evidence of such engagement in the past. This is key as such joint-working allows all residents to fully engage with the Force and build a bond, especially where a named officer becomes a key specified contact for each scheme. It increases community safety and confidence in the police.

Bedfordshire has 11 Streetwatch and 65 Speedwatch schemes throughout the county and 500 volunteer hours have been contributed since April 2015. I want more of these effective schemes, which show local residents promoting good citizenship and supporting a better neighbourhood by patrolling their own streets, to be set up in ever more diverse areas.

I have, for example, encountered significant enthusiasm in the Bury Park area of Luton for a project with Police and local shopkeepers working together to combat thefts and anti-social behaviour with training and equipment provided by the Police along the lines of the linked information-sharing schemes which the Force has established with licensed premises in our town centres.



Talking to Speedwatch and Streetwatch volunteers in Marston Moretaine

Speedwatch is by far the most visible presence of volunteers within the county. In 2012 there were two separate schemes, one managed by the police and the other by Bedford Borough Council. These schemes were merged producing 450 volunteers, some of whom were not actively involved in patrols to combat speeding. Since this time Speedwatch has been heavily promoted and linked closely to the work of the Casualty Reduction Partnership and is administered by the police. As a result there are approximately 1,500 warning letters sent out to motorists each month in Bedfordshire.

I wish to encourage more communities, especially in BME areas, to get involved in this vital work.

The Specials Frontline.

Special Constables support their local communities by volunteering in their free time to work for Bedfordshire Police. Specials have the same powers, uniform and equipment as their regular colleagues. They can volunteer at 18 and work to 65, giving at least 16 hours a month. They undertake a written and fitness test and 2 weeks' continuous training or, if their employment means part-time training is needed, a training programme spread over 8 weeks. They are mentored throughout for 2 probationary years and volunteer for duties via an electronic Duty Sheet.

As of November 18 2015, the Force had 251 Specials in post across Bedfordshire. Over the past year, the county's Specials have contributed a total of 82,200 hours policing, made 582 arrests, stopped 2,100 vehicles and seized 155.

We must continue to recruit Special Constables as key supporters of the Force but be more realistic than in the past concerning numbers. We are recruiting from the same pool as the Retained Duty System of volunteer firefighters, for example. Reaching 500 Specials proved impossible under the previous PCC due at least in part to the fact that, once volunteers have become Specials, the appeal of policing in our county often leads them to apply to become full-time officers. For example, since 2013, over 50 officers have now moved from being Specials to full-time duty. I cannot see this as undesirable as both the individual and the Force therefore have had the opportunity to "try before they buy" and such recruits enter the service with realistic expectations and enthusiasm based on experience.

The Special Constabulary is integral to the way Bedfordshire Police operates and it is, therefore, essential that the recruitment and training of Specials is as efficient as possible. The full process to recruit new Specials usually takes between 3 and 6 months to complete and is dependent on spaces on courses and candidate vetting. I will ensure these processes are reviewed to allow Specials to move from training to frontline service as soon as possible.

I want to actively try to recruit our bright young people who are embarking on a Gap Year, especially after university. A year as a Bedfordshire Special, with all the trustworthiness and reliability this implies, could only prove attractive to future employers and a significant addition to a fledgling CV.

I will work with retailers who employ store detectives to determine whether they might release such individuals, in paid time, to Special duties in the town centres. This would have the added benefit of meeting the Corporate Social Responsibility commitments often stipulated by larger organisations. It would mean individuals within our town centres would have fully-warranted powers of arrest, reducing the time required of our full-time force in responding to shop-lifting incidents, save to transport individuals to be charged. Security staff are already trained to nationally accredited standards and often come from particularly disciplined previous backgrounds such as the military or policing itself, making them particularly valuable when it comes to boosting our "Special Frontline."

This is a particularly pressing area of recruitment to explore given the anecdotal reporting to me of increased stock losses relating to the introduction of paid carrier bags, meaning far more shoppers leave stores carrying goods, making the tasks of managing shop-lifting more difficult and numerous.



Getting round the County – this time with Leighton Buzzard Rotary Club

Subject Matter Experts.

I am also keen to mimic industry in the recruitment of volunteer Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) - sometimes referred to as "Special Specials" - with relevant current or recent commercial experience in a particular area, such as Estate sales or Cybercrime Security, to advise our Force and provide cutting edge information and up to date guidance of a type which exceeds that which is available in-house. Similar valuable input could be provided by volunteer forensic accountants in relation to complicated fraud cases or

interpreters in cases where command of a foreign language is required to investigate in full.

Police Cadets.

I have already written of the potential value of volunteer work as a Special Constable when it comes to attracting the attention of a future employer. The same is true of an academic institution for those of a younger age.

I particularly want to commission our Force to work more closely with schools, colleges and youth organisations to extend our network of Police Cadets, increasing the number of those involved with policing within our communities and respect for, and understanding of, the Force.

In September a new unit will be created in Biggleswade to cover the Sandy and Shefford areas, in addition to the bases in Bedford and Luton. It will be run by a Police Constable, supported by a PCSO and a PSV (Police Support Volunteer).

I support the Force in recognizing a gap in life experience and maturity which has existed at the end of the two-year Cadet Programme and addressing it. In October the Force will introduce a third-year programme for cadets who sometimes struggle to make the transition from cadet to Special Constable at just 18. Traditionally the Force encourages its cadets to become Specials and move on into regular officer roles in later years, however a number have been unable to progress in this way without extra help. The new third year programme will offer coaching and mentoring as well as encouraging the cadets to give us a young person's perspective on emerging crime issues such as hate crime and cybercrime.

Independent Custody Visitors.

Bedfordshire Police is emerging from a deeply unfortunate period relating to two deaths in police custody which have been tragedies for those most directly involved and which have, inevitably, reduced public confidence in the Force. The PCC has a legal duty to oversee and monitor the Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) Scheme to allow third parties access to our custody arrangements to see for themselves that they are maintained and administered correctly.

My specific responsibilities as a PCC include ensuring there is a robust and effective ICV scheme running in Bedfordshire, with visits taking place regularly in all areas of police custody including those relating to terrorism detention (where the ICVs submit their reports to the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation). I must ensure that volunteers are trained and well-managed with the Scheme Manager delivering regular reports on issues within custody for me to recognise individual problems and on-going trends. I must ensure that the visitors have regular and formal opportunities to raise concerns with the police and that the police and partners deal with such concerns.

This is particularly important, at the time of writing, in the wake of the inquest into the death of Istiak Yusuf on June 13 2015 after he took cocaine and MDMA, after drinking alcohol, having brought the drugs into police custody following his arrest for an alleged Domestic Violence assault. The inquest concluded on May 10 2016. The coroner and IPCC have advised that those who are detained must be thoroughly searched (though not all

should be strip-searched which I believe the public would find unacceptable) and that those who appear to be sleeping must be roused to check their condition, rather than with a visual check alone through the cell hatch.

Anyone who views the documentary series "24 Hours in Police Custody," which is filmed in our Force area, can see for themselves the intense challenges and demands of working in our custody areas and appreciate the acute pressures on the custody team in such a busy and unpredictable location. The Independent Custody Visiting Scheme is part of the required checks and balances to assist me in ensuring that recommendations concerning custody which have been made to the Force continue to be observed as we move forward. I will ensure that Visitors are kept fully briefed and are regularly debriefed by the OPCC team to ensure that feedback is monitored, and where necessary, acted upon without delay.

Visitors have achieved significant changes nationally including influencing staff levels to ensure that custody is safe, ensuring proper healthcare is available together with access to blankets, water and toilet rolls as well as giving community assurance that there is proper treatment of detainees, including those held in relation to terrorism, to increase overall confidence in the police.

The Independent Custody Visiting Association is a national organisation that leads, supports and represents custody visiting schemes. PCCs in every region nominate a representative to its Management Board to represent the local scheme. Through the Board we can share learning, practice and findings as part of Bedfordshire's contribution to the National Preventive Mechanism.

Making Sure that Crime Does Not Pay

I am certain that both victims and the wider law-abiding public endorse the principal that crime should not pay. Where proceeds of crime can be seized and retained to pay for policing in our Force area, this seems to be an area of natural justice.

I will ensure we work ceaselessly with our partners in the Eastern Region to seize criminals' assets wherever practically possible. The Eastern Region Special Operations Unit (ERSOU) is gaining increasing experience and ability in the successful targeting of criminals' assets from cash to foreign property and there is potential to do far more.

A new priority for me to set for Bedfordshire Police is the seizure of large sums of cash held by individuals who cannot account for its origin. This is a way to disrupt and disturb those who deal in drugs as well as in stolen and counterfeit goods, for example, to remove the proceeds of such criminal activity to bolster our own resources for fighting crime. This is a power enshrined in law and one Bedfordshire Police should be using wherever possible.

I also intend that any share of offenders' fines and out-of-court disposals available to us through the Victim Surcharge should be spent on victims' services since this seems both right and proper and, again, reflects natural justice.

In Hertfordshire, funds raised through the Prisoners' Earnings Act - more than £20,000 - has also been ring-fenced to directly pay for increased security protect the homes of the vulnerable comprising a combination of door and window locks, gates and arson-proof letterboxes. This seems eminently sensible to

help reduce further victimization and create a greater sense of reassurance and security for those who need it most.

Holding to Account

Since Bedfordshire Police's Chief Finance Officer oversees both the accounts of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and that of the Force, and as I have a duty to hold the force to account financially, I am recruiting a Head of Financial Scrutiny to perform the function of on-going audit on behalf of the OPCC. This individual will have the accountancy skills and experience to make a full and continuous examination of the Force's budget and that of my office.

He or she will also examine the business case for any significant changes mooted for the Force. This is necessary input to review the commercial viability of our plans with the neutrality of a highly experienced third party who sits outside policing.

A principle duty of the Police and Crime Commissioner is to hold the Chief Constable to account when it comes to the public's priorities in policing. I am delighted, therefore, that our Chief Constable Jon Boutcher and his top tier "Executive" team have such significant, and recent, experience of operational policing. In the seven months leading up to the May 5 election I believe the senior team and I have built a strong foundation for cooperative working together over my four-year term.

I will be meeting the Chief Constable, Deputy Chief Constable and Assistant Chief Constable (or a combination thereof) on at least a weekly basis in a Police Business Meeting to review our progress in a number of areas already identified by this team and with respect to areas I submit on behalf of the public, based firmly on the content of this Plan, or as pressing matters arise and are brought to my attention.

I intend that the Chief Constable and relevant members of the Executive Team join me in public meetings to explain the outcome of such holding to account and the plans for improved policing which result.

I will commission an annual report from the Chief Constable on delivery as it relates to this Plan and an update on recorded crime which I will share with the public.

I will chair quarterly Strategic Performance Reviews of Bedfordshire Police and of Joint Protective Services (JPS), the tri-force services which the Force leads on behalf of Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire. I will also meet regularly with the Strategic Performance Board and Audit Committee for a review of where we are heading and how.

In addition, I will also meet regularly with the Police and Crime Panel for Bedfordshire Police, comprised of cross-party members from councils across the county and independents, all of whom have responsibility to hold me to account as your Commissioner.

Feedback from you

Feedback from the public is critically important, to learn from the grass roots how you feel about the initiatives we are introducing at Bedfordshire Police and in development of this Plan as we move forward. This is why I wish my office to provide an Outreach Team of Ambassadors to engage with the public through meetings with all our Parish Councils and other community groups on request, wherever possible.

I will meet regularly with the three unitary local authorities in the county to the same end and will also visit our town councils wherever possible, on invitation. I will hold the annual Parish Councils' Conference for the same purpose and to keep local communities informed on policing progress.

I will regularly liaise with the senior representatives of Community Safety Partnerships and review their own statutory annual reports on aims and objectives.

I will write regular features within our county-wide press titles and make myself available to broadcasters as far as possible to update you on progress and keep you up to date with my activity and that of my office on social media.

This document represents my initial thinking as I come into the role of Commissioner. Inevitably some of these ambitions will be honed and altered by changing circumstances and additional actions will also be undertaken. You will doubtless have a view on how well or otherwise I am making a difference to policing in your area, within the constraints of police numbers and budget. The funding position determined by Central Government will also be a key factor in effective delivery.

I will endeavour to respond as quickly and fully as possible to your communications through my office, so all comments and complaints are handled fairly and equitably, so that we can all genuinely work together to help the Police to help the public and build better policing for Bedfordshire.



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