

AGENDA ITEM 7

WEST MERCIA POLICE AND CRIME PANEL 27 NOVEMBER 2019

RURAL CRIME STRATEGY – CONSULTATION REPORT

Recommendation

1. Members of the Panel are asked to consider the comments received on the draft Rural Crime Strategy.

Consultation Overview

2. The Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) draft Rural Crime Strategy went out for public consultation on 10th October 2019 and was open until 8th November 2019.
3. The Strategy consultation was publicised through a number of channels including:
 - The PCC's website;
 - A press release circulated to all media outlets across West Mercia;
 - Social media (Facebook and Twitter);
 - An email to key stakeholders and partners including the National Farmers Union (NFU), Community Safety Partners and Town and Parish Councils. The latter were initially notified via their Local Association which was followed up with a direct email from the PCC's office two weeks into the consultation
 - Public 'surgery' style Q&A events in local communities, organised by the PCC
4. A copy of the Strategy and consultation details were also circulated to the Panel.

Consultation Responses

5. Respondents were asked to read the Strategy document before completing a short online survey. This resulted in 38 online responses along with 3 further responses being submitted directly to the PCC's office via email. It is anticipated that a number of additional responses will be received in the coming days from a small number of parish councils who contacted the PCC's office to say they would be considering the document in the week commencing 11th November.
6. In addition to the public consultation internal force stakeholder including the strategic lead for rural and business crime and the Rural and Business Officers were also asked for views on the Strategy during its development.
7. An initial analysis of the online survey results has indicated:

- a. 24 of respondents were members of the public, 13 were responding on behalf of a local authority/town or parish council and one on behalf of a voluntary or community organisation.
- b. Only 24 respondents confirmed which area of the West Mercia they were located in. Of these, 15 were in Worcestershire, 8 in Shropshire and 1 in Herefordshire.
- c. 37 out of 38 respondents agreed with the PCCs vision for tackling rural crime of *reducing crimes that most impact on our rural communities*.
- d. 37 out of 38 respondents agreed with the PCCs aspirations for reducing rural crime set out on page 9 of the Strategy.
- e. When asked to highlight one key area of rural crime the respondent feel to be the most important to be addressed:
 - 12 respondents listed theft, with a number specifically referring to theft from farms or of agricultural vehicles and plant;
 - 8 listed road safety related issues
 - 5 listed fear of crime or vulnerability / isolation issues
 - 4 listed burglary
 - 3 listed drugs or violent crime
 - 2 listed wildlife crime
 - 2 listed vandalism or anti-social behaviour
 - Other issues included fly tipping and agricultural crime

8. Twenty five respondents make specific comments on the draft Strategy. These are shown at Appendix 1.

9. The three responses received directly into the PCC's office are shown at Appendix 2 and 3.

Response from the PCC

10. The PCC welcomes the feedback received and is currently assessing the consultation results to determine any amendments to be made to the draft Strategy in light of the consultation. Those respondents who emailed in requesting a direct response will receive a formal response in due course.

11. The PCC will update the Panel on the outcome of the consultation review at the meeting.

12. Once the Strategy has been finalised, the Commissioner's Policy Team will develop a rural crime delivery plan to monitor progress against the recommendations.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 Online comments on the Draft Strategy
 Appendix 2 Email comments on the Draft Strategy
 Appendix 3 Response from a Shropshire academic

Contact Points for this Report

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Head of Legal and Democratic Services) the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report are:

Agenda and minutes of the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel on [10 September 2019](#)

Draft Rural Crime Strategy

<https://www.westmercia-pcc.gov.uk/consultation-rural-crime-strategy/>

All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website [here](#)

Online comments received on the Draft Strategy

- It is important that police are visible and approachable
- To remedy the above, closer working with Highways Authority to make main "B" roads more suitable for increased volume and size of HGVS / Large Agricultural Vehicles etc.
- lacks any objectives based on %age decreases. Too much aspiration no actual reduction targets
- Again, from that information from the NFU it is apparent that communication sits at the 'top of the tree'. In other words, when crimes, particularly when there is a spate, the community, as far as is operationally possible must be made aware of the actions of police in order that they feel both supported and protected
- KPIs are not measuring the right things, they are only measuring the quantum of the problem, not how effectively it is being addressed - e.g. Rather than measuring 'Increased Crime Reporting' you need to measure 'number, or percentage, of total number of crimes reported that are satisfactorily resolved.
- we are low crime so very lucky but anything to make Police presence felt in rural areas is good, crime comes out to villages as the criminals know they have more time to commit a crime
- It is great to see the importance of feedback being gained from communities. However, it does not clarify how this will be done. Rural communities have a high rate of older people who are part of a generation of no technical advance skills in internet use to respond to online surveys such as this. They are a vulnerable group and often live in isolation. How will the new Strategy address this, to ensure their voices are heard and that they feel safe and secure within their homes and rural area?
- Clear and well presented
- To give maximum publicity in the immediate local community when a crime committed in that area is cleared up and the perpetrators arrested and given a sentence that the COMMUNITY considers appropriate to the impact on that community's sense of well-being.
- Pleased that wildlife crime is being addressed
- More resources for actual crime (eg burglary, assault) and less on perceived crime (eg hate crime)
- I support the focus on wildlife crime and road safety, which are my priorities in this sense. I am surprised about the lack of reference to fox hunting, which I hope is being addressed.
- Don't think that " Wildlife Crime" should be a high priority

- Strategy is good, but only on paper, it does not follow onto the ground
- The draft Strategy seems good. However, I am concerned about the number of police looking after rural areas. There needs to be more because response times can be significant in rural areas and criminals no doubt are aware of this and thus committing crime in rural areas is likely to go unsolved as the perpetrators have ample time to escape before any police arrive.
- Excellent; rural crime has been ignored for too long.
- Ripple Parish has an active Community Speed Watch group operating on the Ryall Rd (a designated no through traffic zone) that would be far more effective if backed up by more frequent police presence during & outside of the Speed Watch sessions.
- It all seems to hang on telling the Chief Constable what to do next
- Engaging rural communities is more difficult so grants where engagement is used as a criteria for grants etc disadvantages rural communities more.
- Summary poster for rural noticeboards/parish magazines useful
- We're all just so fed up of everything being stolen.
- A very welcome initiative and good to see that rural crime is a specific focus. A good starting point, increasing resource from 5 to 10 FTE but given the geographical coverage much more than this is needed.
- We have had great support and visibility from the RABO, the Ross SNT are also keen to provide visibility/reassurance but this is very limited due to their numbers/workload. Investment in non-frontline (RABO etc. should provide increased visibility, advice/reassurance. Speeding and road safety are a key concern for our village which is dissected by the A49. We have had good support from Safer Roads Partnership and have established a CSW and the PC have also funded a SID, both to 'educate' drivers however there is no enforcement activity to reinforce this. Perception is still that support/activity/funding will only come once deaths have occurred. 'Rural crime' for our community includes Heating oil thefts, garden/agricultural machinery thefts, vulnerability (isolated, elderly population), domestic abuse, SOC (potential for people exploitation/trafficking with large agricultural, seasonal workforce on local farms), rural road speeds and wildlife crime (poaching)
- There are no measurable targets to assess whether you have succeeded in achieving your objectives. Though there are statistics included it's all a bit subjective
- Very important that Rural areas have a voice and confidence that their views are important

Appendix 2

Email comments received

1. Bromsgrove and Redditch CCG

It does not include particular relevance to Domestic abuse nor does it mention the criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults, sexual exploitation (although fleetingly mentions sexual abuse), nor modern slavery – I am surprised that the Get Safe Initiative in Worcestershire has not been adopted for Herefordshire.

In view of the current climate I believe this certainly needs to be explored further.

2. Kempsey Parish Council

We should like to congratulate Mr Campion and his team for recognising the impact that crime is having on rural communities and for taking the matter forward with this Strategy. We have noted the 'measures of success' proposed in the policy and hope that the Commissioner will be able to obtain the resources necessary to meet these targets.

We should have liked to be able to comment in more detail on the Strategy but the short consultation period has unfortunately precluded that. You will appreciate that most Parish Councils meet only monthly and therefore a two week consultation period does not allow for proposals such as these to be discussed in council. We would therefore suggest that any future consultations should be a minimum of six weeks duration.

Appendix 3

Response from a Shropshire academic

Please note this has been submitted as an annotated version of the Strategy and is attached as a separate document.