



Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire and
Luton Borough Council

Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel

Interim Activity Report for the period May to December 2018

Issued: January 2019

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1. FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIR

The Police and Crime Panel has had a custom and practice of providing an annual Panel Activity Report for the three Unitary Councils in the Bedfordshire Police Area after the end of each municipal year. The Panel has received a request to provide reports more frequently. Accordingly the Panel will henceforth provide activity reports 3 times each year.

This report provides a summary of the activity of the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel during the period following the last full Panel Activity Report of 2017/2018.

As reported in the Panel Activity Report 2017/2018 the Force had been rated with an inadequate grading by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS). In the period following that report and as a result of a considerable amount of hard work the Force demonstrated improvements in 3 of the 4 categories rated, an achievement which no other Force had achieved. The Panel however requested that the new HMICFRS Inspector Matt Parr attend a Panel meeting in October and asked of him a number of questions regarding any further improvements that could be made to the Force performance.

The HMIC Inspector commented that whilst Bedfordshire Police had both strengths and weaknesses one of the major challenges was the overall structural problems which were linked to the severe underfunding issues.

The Panel continue to challenge the PCC on all areas of her Police and Crime Plan and considerable progress has been made in many of these areas. It is particularly worth highlighting the successful introduction of Community Police Hubs around the county which have been resourced despite the continued funding reductions.

In addition the Victims Hub, "Signpost", was launched in April 2018 and has already provided a large number of victims with the support and direction they require.

As you would expect there has also been increased scrutiny and questioning on the response to gang, gun and knife crime in the County, with a number of related presentations covering actions being taken, including a Joint Home Office and Beds Police forum held at Luton Hoo in October and attended by Policing Minister Nick Hurd.

Over the coming months the Panel's focus will return to funding issues with the Governments funding for 2019/20 having recently been announced. The Panel were delighted to see the winning of the recent Home Office grant for £4.6M, but need to focus on the long-term underfunding issues in Bedfordshire.

Mr Paul Cain
Chair, Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel

2. MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES

Since the Full Panel Activity Report for the municipal year 2017/18, 4 meetings of the Panel were held and issues discussed as set out below. Details of these matters can be found in the published Minutes of the meetings here:

<http://www.councillorsupport.bedford.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=561&Year=0>

2.1 On 19 June 2018 the Panel met at Bedford Borough Hall. Mr Cain was re-elected as Chair of the Panel and Cllr Saleem was appointed as Vice-Chair. The following matters were considered:

- Public Confidence in Policing and the use of Stop and Search powers.
- Implementation of the new Signpost Hub for victims of crime.
- Implementation of 8 new Community Hubs.
- The growing problems of youth violence, gang culture and knife-crime in the County.
- The Rural Policing Team
- Issues relating to sale of the former Greyfriars Police Station.
- Audio recording of meetings and venue for meetings.

2.2 On 14 August 2018 the Panel met at Bedford Borough Hall where the following matters were considered:

- Issues relating to sale of the site of the former Ampthill Police Station.
- A presentation from the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Bedfordshire Stop and Search Panel.
- Police and Crime Plan priority 3: "To ensure that the police are available when we need them most".
- Police and Crime Plan priority 6: "To protect the police to protect the public with a proper duty of care".
- The development of a National Association of Police and Crime Panels.

2.3 On 9 October 2018 the Panel met at the Offices of Central Bedfordshire Council where the following matters were considered:

- The attendance of Inspector Matt Parr of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) who spoke to the Panel and answered questions relating to the Bedfordshire Force, funding issues and future trends.
- Statements made by the Chief Constable and the Commissioner in response to the Inspector.
- Implementation of the new Police IT system Athena which was encountering problems.
- The convening of a Task and Finish group made up of Panel Members to assist the Commissioner in the development of a revised Estates Strategy.

2.4 On 11 December 2018 the Panel met at the Leagrave Centre in Luton where the following matters were considered:

- A Government grant to the Bedfordshire Force of almost £4.6m to assist with work to battle serious youth violence, gun and knife crime.
- The Commissioner's roles and responsibilities.
- The financial impact of changes to Pensions.
- Police and Crime Plan priority 1: "A return to more visible Community Policing across the County".
- Police and Crime Plan priority 8: "Working with partners to break the cycle of serial offending and to prevent crime wherever possible".
- The OPCC Milestone Plan for delivery of the outstanding pledges of the Police and Crime Plan 2016-2020

3. COMPLAINTS

During the period covered by this report, no complaints about the Commissioner within the remit of this Panel had been received.

4. CONFIRMATION HEARINGS

During the period covered by this report no confirmation hearings for appointments by the Commissioner had been required.