

DEVON AND CORNWALL POLICE AUTHORITY
RESOURCES COMMITTEE
24 MARCH 2005

FOI OPEN

Report by Chief Constable

EXTENDED POLICE FAMILY STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION

1. This strategy incorporates six of the roles within the Extended Police Family, namely Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), Traffic Wardens, Police Volunteers, Special Constables, Community Safety Accreditation Schemes (CSAS) and various watch members such as Neighbourhood Watch (NHW). The purpose of the strategy is to inform the direction, pace and extent of adoption and integration of the Extended Police Family within the force. The strategy will provide a framework on which to amend and build further Force Policy in order to facilitate and support the role of the Extended Police Family. This paper is the product of strategic direction and decisions taken at BCU Commanders Board on 18 November 2004, Command Team Policy Seminar on 29 November 2004 and Force Strategic Board on 22 February 2005.

BACKGROUND

2. The concept of the Extended Police Family potentially allows the police to enhance performance, community safety and engagement, improve service delivery and to introduce new ways of working. However, in order to achieve this the force needs to learn how to better manage, steer and co-ordinate the policing efforts of others. The force must also continue to challenge the view that the provision of visible patrols is the preserve of regular sworn officers.

In order to realise the potential of the Extended Police Family there needs to be a joined up cohesive strategy, thereby avoiding a confused and fragmented approach. It is however recognised that central government timescales and desire for rapid change influence much of this agenda.

FORCE POLICY

3. Force Policy will require development in relation to most of the roles within the Extended Police Family. For PCSOs there will need to be a degree of strengthening and clarification. No policy currently exists in respect to Police Volunteers. In relation to Traffic Wardens the areas for development may have some interdependencies with those of PCSOs. For the Special Constabulary, a review of D115 is already nearing completion. The Force is already part of a regional CSAS pilot, which will inform much of the policy development for this role.

PERFORMANCE

4. A clear framework for the Extended Police Family provides the potential to positively effect the performance of the Force. Accessing funding streams and the provision of extra resource and skill base, would be closely linked to neighbourhood policing, citizenship and reducing the reassurance gap.

FINANCIAL

5. The potential recruitment of large numbers of PCSOs may have long lasting and as yet unknown cost implications for the Force, which are to a large degree dictated by Home Office policy and funding criteria. Although Police Volunteers and the Special Constabulary may at first seem an attractive option in terms of potential financial savings, they attract substantial financial commitments in terms of recruitment, training and management.

ESTATES

6. The potential recruitment of large numbers of PCSOs will have an impact upon Police Station accommodation and may be constrained by the capacity within the Force to house them.

PERSONNEL

7. The introduction of Police Volunteers and the further recruitment of PCSOs would provide a significant increase in the workload of BCU HR Departments.

It is recognised that any change of role for Traffic Wardens is a sensitive issue and any decisions will require both HR and staff association involvement.

TRAINING

8. The potential recruitment of large numbers of PCSOs will have an impact upon the Force Training Plan and may be constrained by the capacity within the Force to provide training.

CONSULTATION

9. Both the Police Federation and Unison have had the opportunity to read and make comment upon the previously circulated Extended Police Family briefing paper.

The Police Federation has expressed interest in relation to the following issues:

- The recruitment of PCSOs at the expense of regular sworn officer strength
- The numbers of PCSOs which a Sergeant may be required to supervise in addition to regular sworn officers and Special Constables
- The liability of a supervisor where a PCSO has identified a need and desire to be issued with personal protective equipment and the PCSO is subsequently injured after the failure to issue such equipment

Unison has indicated they are fundamentally opposed to the notion of Police Volunteers undertaking roles which, are directly linked to those performed by their members. However, they do acknowledge the benefits which, Police Volunteers may bring to tasks such as crime prevention. Similarly, they would be opposed to the use of Specialist Special Constables in roles undertaken by their members.

LINKS TO TARGETS

10. National Plans

- The Home Office Strategic Plan 2004-2008:

Links with preventing and reducing crime, community engagement and volunteering.

- National Policing Plan 2005-2008:

Assists toward the achievement of targets in terms of Special Constable and PCSO recruitment. Contributes to the domains of Citizen Focus, Reducing Crime, Investigating Crime and Promoting Public Safety.

11. Force Engagement Circle

- Rooted in our Communities

Encouraging the development and expansion of the wider police family e.g. Special Constabulary, Traffic Wardens, PCSOs and volunteers.

Improving accessibility by reviewing opening hours at police stations against public demand and alternative points of contact e.g. shop fronts, mobile police stations and shared venues such as post offices, village halls etc.

- Valuing our Communities

Staff stimulating and when appropriate co-ordinating problem solving projects/plans involving local people and other agencies.

To detect and reduce crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour and to increase the number of offenders brought to justice.

- Increasing confidence in our service

Directed uniform patrols, Neighbourhood Beat Managers and deployment of Special Constabulary and PCSOs to improve our visibility within local communities.

Application of problem solving techniques to ensure the early elimination of repeated crimes, social disorder and issues adversely effecting 'quality of life'.

- A Partnership Culture

Neighbourhood Beat Teams and other staff developing a network of community contacts to build 'grass root' partnerships to solve local problems.

RECOMMENDATION

12. It is recommended that the Committee agree the adoption of the Strategy.

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