



Matthew Barber
Police & Crime Commissioner
for Thames Valley



PROTECTING THAMES VALLEY

PROTECTING COMMUNITIES | PROTECTING PEOPLE | PROTECTING PROPERTY

POLICE & CRIME PLAN | 2024-2029
MY PLAN FOR A SAFER THAMES VALLEY



Foreword

I am proud of the work that has been achieved since I was first elected as Police & Crime Commissioner in May 2021. Thames Valley Police has a record number of police officers and key crimes such as burglary are down significantly since before the pandemic.

Serving the public as PCC is a huge privilege and I am passionate about making our communities safer. I have driven forward important work such as Op Deter to help tackle knife crime, which has resulted in significant reductions in knife-enabled offences and Thames Valley being recognised as one of the safest parts of the country.

Over the last year I have successfully pushed for increases in neighbourhood policing and improvements in tackling retail crime. We are starting to see the benefits of this work on our streets with more police and more criminals charged; but there is more to do.

In this document I set out my vision for policing in Thames Valley for the coming years. I will work closely with the Chief Constable to deliver for all of our communities, ensuring common sense policing, cutting crime and catching criminals.



Matthew Barber
Police & Crime Commissioner





Protecting Thames Valley

This plan sets out some of the key ways in which I will seek to work with the police, the public and other agencies to protect Thames Valley.

Thames Valley Police is the largest non-metropolitan police force in the country and covers one of the most economically productive areas. Yet we still see significant risks across our increasingly diverse population.

Thames Valley Police will serve all residents, seeking to make every community safer by reducing crime and creating a more resilient society.



The nature of crime and our expectations of the police have changed - and no doubt will continue to do so.

This Police & Crime Plan sets out the areas I will be expecting the Chief Constable to focus on over the coming years, as well as identifying work for the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner with other agencies such as local authorities.

This document is not exhaustive, but it outlines the key priorities that I am setting out on behalf of the public.

It also covers a number of enabling areas of activity that will be important to delivering the overall goal of reducing crime and keeping the public safe.

Protecting Communities

It is too easy to judge effective policing simply by the number of arrests made or by the car chases and dramatic body worn video images that often make for exciting television. However, at the core of British policing, since its inception in 1829, is crime prevention.

This is the mantra that must run through everything we seek to achieve in Thames Valley to keep people safe.

Of course, charge rates, arrests, and visible policing remain important, but they are a means to an end, rather than the end in itself - a community where we can all feel safe as well as actually being safe.



Many of the biggest concerns the public have are not related to serious crime. Anti-social behaviour does not always have a direct victim, but it can make whole communities feel unsafe. Some of those who pose the greatest risk on our roads often do so through recklessness and negligence, rather than criminal intent.

Enforcement is important in all of these areas, but the police cannot act alone.

Local authorities and schools can and must play a significant role in tackling these issues.

Confidence in policing and the safety of the society we live in really matters. Even in low crime areas, perception can create fear that has a real impact on people's lives. In a social media age the challenges are greater than ever, but the need to build confidence also becomes more important than ever before.

Crime Prevention

The last of the Peelian principles of policing is a general instruction: “to recognise always that the test of police efficiency is the absence of crime and disorder, and not the visible evidence of police action in dealing with them.”

Crime prevention should be core to the work of Thames Valley Police. The OPCC will work with sector partners to support both short-term and long-term crime prevention initiatives.

Acquisitive crime such as burglary, vehicle crime and retail crime are areas where traditional prevention is key and early intervention can help to reduce crimes such as serious violence.

Measure: Continued reductions in priority crime types

Neighbourhood Policing

Visible neighbourhood policing is not important simply to reassure the public, but to ensure the Force becomes more proactive in fighting crime.

Continued support for neighbourhood teams, building on my [Crimefighters Strategy](#) published in 2023, and ensuring the police are more accessible to the public by improving reporting and putting more officers into proactive neighbourhood policing roles.

Measure: Increased PCs and PCSOs in neighbourhood roles

Road Safety

Publishing and supporting the delivery of a Road Safety Strategy that better links Roads Policing with the work of highways authorities.

Improving data sharing in order to focus on those areas and issues that present the greatest risk to road safety, and seeking to prevent incidents by supporting changes to the road environment.

Making better use of technology and ensuring flexibility within roads policing to respond to local concerns.

Measure: Reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured on our roads

Anti-Social Behaviour

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) is one of the most common concerns raised by residents, but often the incidents reported fall below the criminal threshold.

However, we know that ASB can blight communities and, if left unchecked, can escalate into greater harm and criminality.

Whilst the police have a key role to play in tackling ASB, local authorities often have greater powers to deter and prevent these behaviours.

Increased support through the Partnership Fund will strengthen this work.

Measure: Reduce anti-social behaviour in communities

Building Confidence

Policing by consent is central to the model of policing in the UK. Recent incidents, a rapidly changing society and the rise of social media all present challenges for the police.

Work must continue to improve communication between the police and the public they serve; always striving to build relationships within communities as well as between communities and the police.

Changes to the police complaints system will increase accountability, and a wider range of people will be recruited to assist in the governance of the police.

Measure: Increased levels of public confidence

Protecting People

Although the likelihood of any of us being a victim of serious violence or a serious sexual offence remains low, the impact can destroy lives.

In order to protect people from the most serious offences we will seek to prevent crime in the first place; relentlessly pursuing criminals who pose a threat to others and supporting victims to guide them through the Criminal Justice System and rebuild their lives.



The police are the only people who can arrest dangerous individuals and present them to prosecutors in order to protect others. Whether it is domestic abuse, those who carry knives on our streets, or predatory sex offenders online, that action is vital.

The identification and pursuit of persistent offenders is key as is wider education and prevention, particularly in the world of domestic abuse where we know that child victims and witnesses

are more likely to go on to experience domestic abuse as adults, either as victims or as perpetrators themselves. Similarly, those who carry weapons with the misguided justification of protection are much more likely to end up being victims.

As well as dealing with individual offenders, we must seek to break these cycles in order to see a generational reduction in sexual and serious violence.

Rape and Sexual Offences

Continuing to support the police, criminal justice partners and victims services to support those who are subject to some of the worst crimes imaginable.

The dedicated Rape and Sexual Offences (RASO) Superintendent role within Thames Valley Police has brought clarity and focus to this area with efforts to improve investigations.

We will continue to work closely with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to improve the charge rate for these offences.

A relentless focus on perpetrators to help prevent future offending.

Measure: Improved charge rates for RASO offences

Domestic Abuse

One of the highest volume crimes dealt with by the police, I will continue to support the Force to protect victims and improve data-sharing to reduce the risks to others.

Continuing to support victims' charities and working more closely with local authorities to ensure equitable coverage of Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) as well as seeking to establish Family Drug & Alcohol Courts (FDACs) across the Thames Valley.

Measure: Improved outcome rates for domestic abuse

Night-Time Economy

Whilst the biggest risk to women is sadly from people they already know, one of the greatest concerns is the risk on a night out.

Expanding the excellent work of [Project Vigilant](#), I will work with local authorities and venues to ensure our towns and cities remain safe places for people to enjoy themselves.

Focusing on perpetrators, the police will seek to reduce drugs, violence and sexual offences in the night time economy.

Measure: Reduced offending and increased prevention activity

Serious Violence

Levels of serious violence in Thames Valley are some of the lowest in the country and the Force has been recognised for its work in reducing homicide, but the devastation serious violence, particularly knife crime, can bring is huge.

I will continue to support [Op Deter](#) and Op Deter Youth which has seen big reductions in knife crime, as well as working with other agencies through our Violence Prevention Partnership.

Measure: Continued low levels of serious violence and homicide

Abuse and Exploitation

A more connected world, both physically and digitally, has brought huge benefits, but it has also increased the risk of abuse and exploitation.

The risks are online, through the sharing of indecent images, or contact abuse committed to order; as well as the real-world dangers of criminal and sexual exploitation on our streets, particularly linked with county lines drug gangs.

Education, prevention and prosecution are all needed to tackle the risk.

Measure: Increased safeguarding of those being exploited

Protecting Property

In recent years the police have focussed resources, for some understandable reasons, on high harm offences. As reflected in this plan, those crimes of serious and sexual violence are hugely important and remain a focus for attention; however more traditional, acquisitive crime remains a real concern for the public.

Although crimes such as burglary are at historically low levels and have fallen since before the pandemic, the impact is significant and public confidence is undermined if the police are not seen to tackle these issues.



Thames Valley Police has a good record of reducing the levels of burglary; the Rural Crime Taskforce has begun to have a real impact in isolated communities and the Retail Crime Strategy is showing signs of a strong start. Nevertheless, there is more to be done.

We must redouble our efforts in these areas, ensuring that concerns about vehicle crime are addressed. More visible, proactive neighbourhood policing teams will help to deter and detect criminals in these important areas.

Traditional policing will, however, not be adequate to tackle the growing risk of cybercrime and fraud, yet it is one of the biggest challenges facing us.

Investment in specialist resources, such as the use of drones and digital forensics, will help to bring criminals to justice but prevention is once again key if we are to stop people from becoming victims in the first place.

Residential Burglary

Whilst burglaries remain incredibly low in Thames Valley, the impact of an offence on a family can be massive.

That is why burglary must still be prioritised in order to keep crime levels low and to reassure the public.

All residential burglaries will continue to be attended and the response times to these crimes will be monitored.

Through the police working closely with the CPS, the charge rate will also be expected to rise.

Measure: Continued low levels of burglary and increased charges

Retail Crime

Delivering on the Retail Crime Strategy published in early 2024 will see both the levels of recorded crime and the charge rate rise.

In the short term, the increase in recorded crime will indicate increased confidence from retailers, before we would hope to see offences start to reduce over time.

It is not just traditional retailers that can suffer, but also service providers, such as restaurants, and we must always recognise that there are significant risks of abuse and violence towards shop workers as well as the financial loss caused by retail crime.

Measure: Increase in recorded offences, resulting in higher arrest and charge rates

Vehicle Crime

Vehicle crime may not just be about the loss of a car or van, but often valuable or important contents. These offences can leave victims feeling vulnerable as well as out of pocket.

A renewed focus to tackle organised crime groups. Improving the tactical response to prevent and detect offenders.

Working with vehicle manufacturers to improve vehicle security as new technology has created new risks.

Measure: Reductions in the levels of vehicle crime

Rural Crime

The Rural Crime Taskforce has made a huge impact in reducing crime and building confidence.

Over the next financial year it will see its numbers almost double, allowing it to continue proactive policing across Thames Valley.

Important work must continue to increase crime prevention measures, both with the public and manufacturers, and to work with all parts of the Criminal Justice System to understand the risks these offences pose.

Measure: Reductions in the levels of rural crime

Cybercrime and Fraud

One of the biggest risks to us all is cybercrime and fraud, yet it is not generally top of the list of public concerns and it is difficult for individual police forces to tackle.

We will continue to support the Central Fraud Team, but also increase investment in education and crime prevention to reduce the risks.

Working with partners nationally, we will seek to improve the wider response to cybercrime and fraud by all agencies.

Measure: Increased community education and prevention activity

Enablers

Delivering on the priorities set out in this Police & Crime Plan will require investment and improvements in all areas of policing and within partner agencies. Whilst we strive to maximise the number of police officers serving the public, particularly in neighbourhood policing, there is also the need to invest in support services and the staff that provide them. Although not exhaustive, the areas listed below highlight key enablers that will require attention from the OPCC and Thames Valley Police in order to deliver the wider strategy.

Support for victims

The new operating model for Victims First will improve the breadth and quality of support for victims of crime.

This is in addition to the support provided to the voluntary and charitable sector in order to help victims.

Working with other commissioners will see a more comprehensive offer for victims across Thames Valley.

CCTV Partnership

The foundations of the Thames Valley CCTV Partnership have already been laid, but continued support and investment are needed to both expand the coverage to more areas, and to fully embed and exploit the technical benefits that can come from a more modern, integrated system.

Improving public contact

The police are expected to deliver continued improvements to the 101 non-emergency service as well as enhancing the online offer.

Fully exploiting the benefits of the Victims Portal and continuing to explore the potential use of social media for reporting incidents.

Better use of data

Working with other strategic leaders in Thames Valley to improve data sharing between agencies and the public, particularly making full use of the potential benefits of Thames Valley Together.

Exploring improved processes for disclosure around domestic abuse and firearms licensing.

Early intervention in schools

Reviewing the range of interventions by the police and the OPCC to create a clear strategy for early intervention in schools.

Developing clear messages - for parents as well as children - about the risks faced by young people.

Consistent messages to all families in Thames Valley.

Improving criminal justice

Working through the Local Criminal Justice Board with organisations such as the CPS, prisons, probation and the Courts Service to support partner agencies in reducing backlogs in the Criminal Justice System, improving charge rates and reducing re-offending.

Strategic Policing Requirements

- ◇ Violence against women and girls
- ◇ Terrorism
- ◇ Serious and organised crime
- ◇ National cyber incidents
- ◇ Child sexual abuse
- ◇ Public disorder
- ◇ Civil emergencies

National Crime & Policing Measures

- ◇ Reduce murder and other homicide
- ◇ Reduce serious violence
 - Hospital admissions of under 25s for assault with a sharp object
 - Offences involving discharge of a firearm (police recorded)
- ◇ Disrupt drugs supply and county lines
 - Drug-related homicides
 - Police referrals into drug treatment
- ◇ Reduce neighbourhood crime
 - Burglary, robbery, theft of and from a vehicle, theft from a person
- ◇ Improve satisfaction among victims, with a particular focus on victims of domestic abuse
 - Satisfaction with the police among victims of domestic abuse
 - Victim satisfaction with the police
- ◇ Tackle cybercrime
 - Confidence in the law enforcement response to cybercrime
 - Percentage of businesses experiencing a cyber breach or attack

Resources

I will continue to take a long-term approach to resources, taking into account spending and funding pressures to ensure the delivery of an effective and efficient service. This will include seeking the best level of funding possible from the Government for policing and for the provision of services to effectively support victims of crime.

Working with the Chief Constable I will develop an annual revenue budget, medium term financial plan and capital programme. The annual budget I set covers both day-to-day operational activity of more than £557 million and over the next four years £132 million investment in capital assets such as buildings, ICT and other operational assets such as vehicles. This investment is vital in ensuring police officers in Thames Valley have the tools and the support they need to tackle crime. In setting the budget, I will consider the level of Council Tax Precept in any spending pressures and its impact on households.

I will continue to work with the Force and hold the Chief Constable to account, ensure the effective use of resources and deliver value for money. The Force will continue its programme to deliver savings over the short term, as well as long term sustainable efficiencies which will support the strengthening of frontline policing.

Measuring Success

This plan sets out fifteen priorities and indicative measures of success. This will help to focus effort and resources over the coming years, giving a clear mission to the police on the areas of focus.

Each of these priorities does, however, cover a complex area of work, often involving several different crime types and requiring the cooperation of several partner agencies. Therefore, whilst the indicative measures included in this document seek to set the direction of travel, they do not set out numerical targets. Arbitrary targets in themselves can often have perverse consequences, and subsequently a broad range of measures will be used to assist in holding the Chief Constable to account for delivery of this plan.

These performance measures will be published separately and reviewed regularly to ensure they remain current and help to deliver on the priorities set out in the plan.

Grants and Partnerships

I will continue to support local authorities over the next four years with a budget of more than £12 million through the Partnership Fund. This spending supports Community Safety Partnerships to deliver activities against my Police & Crime Plan to help prevent, deter and reduce crime.

I receive an annual grant from the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) to commission services for victims and witnesses of crime of around £1.4 million. Where viable, I will also seek additional funding to support additional services for victims, particularly those who have suffered domestic abuse, serious or sexual violence.

The Community Fund is created from the proceeds of the sale of goods recovered by the police that cannot be returned to their original owner. I will use this fund to provide small grants to support local voluntary and community groups that are working to improve the lives of people living in the Thames Valley and that contribute to delivering the priorities set out in my Police & Crime Plan.

I will also provide more than £5 million across the next four years for the Crime Prevention Fund, which I will use to fund initiatives which aim to reduce crime and disorder and support victims.

Further details of funding for Thames Valley Police, Commissioning and Grant Funding can be found on my website: thamesvalley-pcc.gov.uk.

Governance and Accountability

Through the regular Performance and Accountability Meetings (PAM) and Liaison Meetings, I will continue to hold the Force to account through the Chief Constable. Continuous monitoring of performance measures will be supported by both the police and the OPCC, with key performance data being published regularly at PAM.

Internal governance of the OPCC will take place through my Senior Leadership Team, and clear business processes for the development of new projects and monitoring of delivery will help to ensure control of activity. I will ensure transparent decision making and publication of information. I will be supported in my oversight of Force activity through the range of volunteers who take part in scrutinising the Force including through various panels and the Independent Custody Visitor Scheme.

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