

Force Review: Options for local policing (Phase 2 engagement)

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Introduction

In May 2022 we began a review into the structure of our force. The review aims to make sure our force is structured in the best possible way to meet current and future challenges.

The last review of this nature was completed in 2010. In 2022, we are working in a much more complex environment, with growing demand and a greater focus on vulnerability, prevention and digital crime. Traditional crime types, such as property theft, have fallen, and been replaced by new, complex and increasingly harmful forms of crime such as child sexual exploitation, sexual violence and county drugs lines.

Our force structure needs to reflect these changes and critically, make changes that support our workforce, many of whom are under pressure.

Since the project began, we have benchmarked our force against six others in detail, looked at long-term trends in policing, carried out extensive resource modelling and spoken to over 200 people of all ranks in our local policing teams to understand what works and what doesn't.

In October 2022 a set of initial recommendations on local policing structures were put to the Chief Constable's management team, who decided to take forward two options from a list of five. They were:

- A continuation of the current 11 LPA model, but with enhancements where possible, or
- A switch to a five-area command model; the five areas would be Oxfordshire, Berkshire West, Berkshire East, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

In November 2022 we came to our partners to ask them for their thoughts on the two options. Many partners mentioned that to provide a full response more detail was needed.

This document outlines further details on our proposals and sets out what is and isn't possible under the two model options.

The review aims to enhance the service we provide to the public and no decisions will be made to the detriment of community policing. **Across both proposals, we will keep the same number of neighbourhood teams and seek to increase the number of officers in visible patrol roles.**

In our earlier correspondence to you we said we expected to be making a decision on a new structure this February; however this is no longer the case. It's important to us that any decision we make is informed by feedback. Therefore no decisions will be made until after we have had further conversations with you, our workforce and our communities.

Key issues with current structure

- The 11 Local Policing Area (LPA) structure works but is under stress and lacks the resources needed to thrive.
- Workloads of officers and staff in some areas are excessive.
- The senior leadership model is not reflective of threat, harm, risk and demand.
- Safeguarding and harm reduction activity has grown in scale and significance since 2010 but is not consistently reflected in structures
- The level of resource dedicated to neighbourhood policing varies significantly between LPAs (from 11% to 26%).
- Highly inconsistent distribution of supervisors across LPAs
- High demands on frontline response sergeants means numbers in post must increase to provide greater support and ensure resilience.
- Significant difference between LPAs as to the functions and terms of different teams
- LPAs struggle to meet surge demand and manage abstractions
- There is competition for scarce resources between commands
- Inspectors are often working across LPAs to provide duty Inspector function

Our options

The review has looked at enhancements we could make to our existing 11 LPA model as well as what could be achieved under a new five-area command model.

Some proposals work across both models, however we have found benefits and resource generally easier to find within a five-area command model than in the existing 11 LPA model.

The review is looking to enhance the service we provide to the public and no decisions will be made to the detriment of community policing. The proposals aim to:

- Strengthen neighbourhood policing
- Protect vulnerable people
- Respond to demand
- Protect our workforce

What will stay the same

While there will be some changes from our proposals, it is important to acknowledge that many things will not change.

Across our proposals for both an enhanced 11 LPA model and a five-area command model, most existing relationships with Neighbourhood Inspectors and Sergeants will not change. In addition, we will maintain many of the same units, such as Neighbourhood policing, including the 108 Neighbourhoods, Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Priority Crime Teams, tasking and incident and crime response teams.

When looking at a potential five-area command model, this will not mean a move to five central hubs. Estates is not in the scope of this review.

Response times

Response times are what we refer to as the time taken from the receipt of a 999 call to our officers attending an incident.

Incident response times depend on a range of factors including how many officers are available to respond, the number of staff able to take calls, the workloads of officers and where response officers are based.

At this stage of the review there are no plans to change the location of any of the response bases. However, moving to a five-area command model could mean more officers based on neighbourhoods, which could reduce overall response times.

Further modelling of response times under a five-area model is ongoing.

We know time taken to respond to emergencies is essential. Under a five-area model we would strive to maintain current response times and make improvements where we can.

Strengthening neighbourhood policing

11 LPA and five-area command

We know how important neighbourhood policing is to our force, our partners and our communities. Our proposals under both 11 and five-area command models aim to strengthen policing in our communities by:

- Maintaining the same number of geographic neighbourhood teams but enhancing the numbers of officers within them
- Bringing in 80 additional neighbourhood officers (funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner)

Further resources could be put into neighbourhood policing by converting some current vacancies in PCSO roles into officer posts. We recognise PCSOs as a critical part of visible patrolling and community engagement. However, with no clear career progression and lack of consistent supervision, the PCSO role is currently difficult to recruit and retain.

The review plans to address these challenges by maintaining the current number of PCSOs in post alongside trialling a new PCSO Supervisor role. This new role will offer career progression to existing PCSOs as well as more support through greater supervision. We hope this will increase satisfaction with the role and encourage our PCSOs to remain with us for the longer-term.

Proposals for Neighbourhood policing are also being supported by work using the Cambridge Crime Harm Index (CHI).

Used by other forces, CHI measures the seriousness of crime harm to victims based on prison sentence starting terms, rather than just counting the number of total recorded crimes. Each individual neighbourhood has a CHI score which is used to calculate the number of PC and PCSO officers allocated to it.

Under CHI, there will be no loss in neighbourhood officer resources in any neighbourhood and in many areas there will be an increase across both proposed models.

Proposals under a five-area command

Moving to a five-area command model would give us the flexibility to refocus current teams (such as Problem Solving Teams) and move resource across to where it is needed. This would allow us to:

- Dedicate 20 officers to work within schools (an increase from the current 12)
- Have 10 officers focused on mental health, ensuring we are aligned with partner agencies to help the most vulnerable
- Put one Neighbourhood Supervisory Officer (NSO) or one PCSO supervisor in every force neighbourhood, increasing the current number
- Establish dedicated Community and Partnership Inspectors to provide enhanced visible leadership on core community issues such as stop and search

Protecting vulnerable people

Since we last reviewed our structure in 2011 policing focus on vulnerability has grown.

Traditional crime types, such as vehicle crime and property theft, have fallen, and been replaced by new, complex and increasingly harmful forms of crime such as child sexual exploitation and sexual violence.

Therefore our proposals aim to improve our service to the most vulnerable in our communities by:

- Creating a new **Harm Reduction Unit**, providing stronger governance and more consistent harm reduction activity (e.g. monitoring and enforcement of Domestic Violence Protection Orders – DVPOs) across areas and focusing on safeguarding and harm prevention opportunities within mental health, exploitation of children/vulnerable adults and domestic abuse.
- Creating officer posts dedicated to obtaining and managing protection orders (e.g. stalking and Domestic Violence Protection Orders)
- Bringing our Domestic Abuse Investigation Unit out of the central force and into the operational areas. This will strengthen resources, better aid joined-up working, strengthen our internal relationships and knowledge to improve our service to victims.

These are possible under both 11 and five models, however would be better resourced and more efficient under the five model. A localised DAIU would be unlikely to be operationally viable in some areas under a five-area command model.

Responding to demand

Our proposals for both 11 and five-area command models would allow us to put resource where demand is by creating a **Proactive Team** focused on County Drugs Lines (CDL) and Serious Acquisitive Crime (SAC). This will take the existing teams (in some areas called stronghold/tasking teams) and put in a consistent structure that will have a good balance in supervisory ratios, dedicated senior officer support and opportunities to work more effectively across areas.

Proposals under a five-area command

Following feedback from our frontline teams, we are continuing to explore options for an **Operational Support Unit** to provide a dedicated response to public order incidents and help with warrants and searches. We currently draw on officers from Neighbourhood and Incident Response for this. This would not be possible under an 11 LPA model, but could under a five (subject to further understanding of resourcing implications).

Protecting our workforce

Policing is under pressure, and our teams, particularly our frontline, face high demand coupled with significant numbers of newly recruited officers.

Our proposals could allow us to address this by:

- Freeing up our Inspectors by removing specialist custody duties from their role. This will reduce demand on our Inspectors and create capacity for them to better manage their teams. This is possible under both five and 11 models.

Proposals under a five-area command

Under a five-area model, we could release 25 sergeant posts from Problem Solving Teams to return to frontline response teams and support our new officers.

Management structures

We know many partners value their existing relationships with their local policing area command teams.

The current LPA Command team set-up runs uniformly across all 11 LPAs (LPA Commander (Superintendent), supported by a Deputy LPA Commander (Chief Inspector) and a Crime Manager (Detective Chief Inspector). Only Milton Keynes has one extra Chief Inspector. Furthermore, there are three Chief Superintendents for the three counties within our force area.

Under a five-area command, the preferred option is moving away from a 'same size fits all' approach to structure and to structures that instead reflect threat, risk harm and demand. This means command teams will be different in size in different areas to reflect this different profile.

Oxfordshire:

- One Chief Superintendent
- Two Superintendents (One Operational Response and one Detective)
- Six Chief Inspectors/Detective Chief Inspectors

Buckinghamshire, Berkshire East and Berkshire West:

- One Chief Superintendent
- Two Superintendents (One Operational Response and one Detective)
- Four Chief Inspectors/Detective Chief Inspectors

Milton Keynes

- One Chief Superintendent
- One Detective Superintendent
- Four Chief Inspectors/Detective Chief Inspectors

A five-area model would reflect differences in threat, harm and demand, deliver geographic management, be Chief Superintendent led and provide additional senior detective leadership.

We know partners value their senior police command teams. Under a five-area command partners in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes would benefit from additional Chief Superintendent support, and across all areas there would be an enhanced leadership team of Superintendents and Chief Inspectors. The aim is that there would be a single senior point of contact for all partners at Superintendent level or above; the same as current arrangements. This would help ensure appropriate continuing representation at partnership meetings and support to our partners across all our areas.

Conclusion

We've looked at enhancements we could make to our existing 11 LPA model as well as what could be achieved under a new five-area command model.

Some proposals work across both models, however within those we have found benefits and resource easier to find within a five-area command model than the existing 11 LPA model.

Telling us what you think

We would welcome your views on this document. You can pass your feedback to us via your local policing contacts, email us at forcereview@thamesvalley.police.uk or

join us at any of the four Teams sessions listed below to ask questions and tell us your thoughts:

Date	Time	Host
Friday 17 March	11am	Chief Superintendent Colin Paine, Head of Force Review
Friday 24 March	11am	Chief Superintendent Colin Paine, Head of Force Review

Please let us know if you are attending and your preferred session via our force review email address. You are also welcome to submit questions in advance via this address.

The closing date for feedback is Friday 28 April 2023.

Next steps – selecting a final option

It's important to us that any decision we make is informed by feedback. Therefore no decisions on a final model for local policing will be made until after we have had further conversations with you, our workforce and our communities.

Your feedback will help inform our Chief Constable's management team, who will select a final option in early summer 2023.

Appendices

Neighbourhood supervisory officers (NSOs)

There are Neighbourhood Supervisory Officers (NSO) in the force but there is inconsistent use of the role - not all LPAs have NSO within their Neighbourhood team.

Under a five-area command model NSOs can be increased to provide line management of PCSOs.

The proposal is to deploy at least one NSO into each neighbourhood across the force to make a total of 108, which represents an increase of 40 on the current number.

This is achievable under both models but would be difficult to effectively resource in an 11 LPA model

Problem Solving teams – redistributing resource

Problem Solving Teams (PSTs) are currently inconsistent in size and function across the force. Initially developed to perform problem-solving duties in support of geographic teams, they have limited resolution capability, coupled with geographic teams who have no resilience to identify issues, develop community relationships or perform any enforcement work. The model is no longer providing an efficient or effective public service.

Releasing resource from PSTs would mean resource could be redistributed into a new 'Harm Reduction Unit'. This would prioritise the statutory police provision in terms of safeguarding as well as demonstrate a proactive and intelligent approach to harm interruption and long-term demand reduction.

We would maintain the number of geographic Inspectors on neighbourhood teams but use the changes to Problem Solving Teams to release 12 Inspector posts to be redeployed elsewhere.

The 14 Inspectors on geographic neighbourhood policing teams will remain; with Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire to have two Inspectors each, Oxfordshire four, and Berkshire West and Berkshire East to have three. This reflects the geographic size and complex partnership arrangements in those areas.

Redistributing resource from PSTs would also allow us to put 25 Sergeants back into Incident Crime Response (ICR). This would provide greater support and resilience to the newly recruited officers who are a core part of our frontline response.

Achievable under a five-area command only

Neighbourhood PCs

Neighbourhood policing is under severe stress with many officers taken away from their duties to assist other teams across the force.

It is proposed to increase the establishment of geographic neighbourhood PCs. This will be achieved partly through the Police Crime Commissioner (PCC) uplift of 80 officers, but could be further increased by a further officers if PCSO vacancies are also converted.

This proposal would also allow:

- Geographic teams to engage in community, patrol and enforcement activity.
- 20 officers to work within schools
- 10 officers focused on mental health, ensuring we are aligned with partner agencies to help the most vulnerable

The above works under both existing 11 LPA and five-area command models

PCSOs

PCSOs are a critical part of visible patrolling and community engagement. However, with no clear career progression and lack of consistent supervision, the PCSO role is currently difficult to recruit and retain.

Over a number of years we have struggled to attract and retain PCSOs to meet our target establishment.

A lack of consistent supervision has led to PCSOs being poorly tasked and coordinated.

The review plans to address these challenges by maintaining the current number of PCSOs in post alongside trialling a new PCSO Supervisor role. This new role will offer career progression to existing PCSOs as well as more support through greater supervision. We hope this will increase officer satisfaction with the role and encourage longer-term careers.

The above works under both existing 11 LPA and five-area command models

Neighbourhood resource distribution

Neighbourhood resources have not been reviewed for some years. There is no clear strategy on how to allocate resources to neighbourhoods. This has led to anomalies regarding the level of resourcing in each neighbourhood

Proposals for Neighbourhood policing are being supported by work using the Cambridge Crime Harm Index (CHI). Used by other forces, CHI measures the

seriousness of crime harm to victims based on prison sentence starting terms, rather than just counting the number of total recorded crimes. Each individual neighbourhood has a CHI score which is used to calculate the number of PC and PCSO officers allocated to it.

Under CHI There will be no loss in neighbourhood officer resources and in many areas there will be an increase.

Achievable under both models

Harm Reduction Units

Safeguarding and harm reduction activity is undertaken inconsistently by LPAs, with each having different posts and processes.

New 'Harm Reduction Units' (HRUs) will not undertake enforcement activity, but draw together the harm profile for the area, partnership liaison, order management and proactive harm prevention opportunities focusing on mental health, exploitation of children/vulnerable adults and domestic abuse. It will provide the lead on orders (Domestic Violence Protection Orders/knife crime prevention orders) and undertake a range of safeguarding activities.

A HRU is possible under both 11 and five models, however the unit would have greater strength in resourcing numbers on a five-area command model

Under a five-area command the Unit could also:

- Identify proactive harm disruption opportunities
- Proactively manage and drive orders
- Work with partners and establish consistent SLAs
- Allow consistent MAPPA/MARAC/MATAC ownership and co-ordination
- Sit under a dedicated DCI

Domestic Abuse Investigation Unit (DAIU)

DAIU is understaffed according to our data. The department struggles to recruit and retain staff.

Proactive opportunities to minimise harm are not always exploited and positive outcomes have fallen in places, therefore it is proposed to devolve DAIU to local ownership.

Achievable under the five-area command model and potentially under the 11, but it would be limited in its scope and operationally unviable in some areas in the latter

Priority Crime Teams (PCTs)

To make PCTs more robust and consistent across the force, it is proposed under a five-area model to have four PCT teams per area to mirror what is currently seen in CID.

The teams will retain focus upon burglary and robbery, but with additional time spent dealing with knife crime, stalking and medium level domestic results. There is currently a lack of consistency across the force in both remit and duty times.

To support this, Milton Keynes and Berkshire East would get uplifts in officer resources whilst maintaining the current overall officer numbers across the force.

It would also see Police Staff Investigators consistently allocated across the force in a joined-up piece of working with CID.

This is achievable under both 11 LPA and five-area command models, but with increased benefits under five, including allowing weekend coverage across the force and maintaining overall officer numbers and investigative functions.