

## Force Review: Phase 1 partner engagement report

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## Introduction

Thank you to everyone who responded to our survey and got in touch with us about our force proposals. We very much value our relationships with our partners and appreciate the time you have taken to tell us what you thought.

Your feedback will be carefully considered in the development of our proposals and we can assure you that no final decisions will be made until we have provided you with further information and a second opportunity to comment. This Phase 2 engagement will take place this spring.

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.

Please see our initial findings below. We look forward to working with you as our review progresses.

**Deputy Chief Constable Jason Hogg**

## Your views

Between 24 November and 31 December 2022 we asked you to comment on our proposals to review the structure of our local policing areas.

### Methodology

A letter from Deputy Chief Constable Jason Hogg outlining the Force Review project and its focus on two options (retaining current 11 LPA model and a five-area command model) was provided to senior leaders within our force for their onward distribution. The letter provided a briefing sheet with further information and a link to a questionnaire.

Feedback from letters into our Chief Constable and emails to our force review mailbox have also been included with the survey responses.

## Executive Summary

Our request for feedback went out to over 100 partners, and we received 56 responses.

Themes included:

- Partners value their existing relationships with local policing
- Data sharing across organisations is an issue
- While there was support for a move to five areas from organisations with similar geographical boundaries, other partners felt a move from 11 local policing areas would lead to less local focus and knowledge, a draw of police resources from lower demand areas into those of higher demand, and loss of existing relationships with local policing teams

### Request for further detail

Many of you mentioned that to provide a full response you needed to see more detail. To explain our thinking, at the time we came to you we were also still working on the details of the proposals and needed to first share that information with our workforce. At the same time, we were also keen to seek your initial thoughts so they could help inform our proposals. Our next phase of engagement, which will follow this spring, will give you further details and second opportunity to comment.

## Question 1: What organisation are you from?

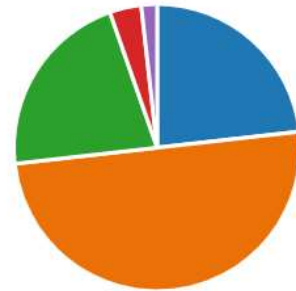
We received responses from a range of partners, including local authorities, parish councils, emergency services, health agencies and probation services.

## Question 2: How would you currently rate partnership working with Thames Valley Police?

We were pleased that 73% of respondents thought their partnership working with us was good or excellent. This mirrored findings in the qualitative survey and emailed responses where many respondents valued their relationships with their local command area teams.

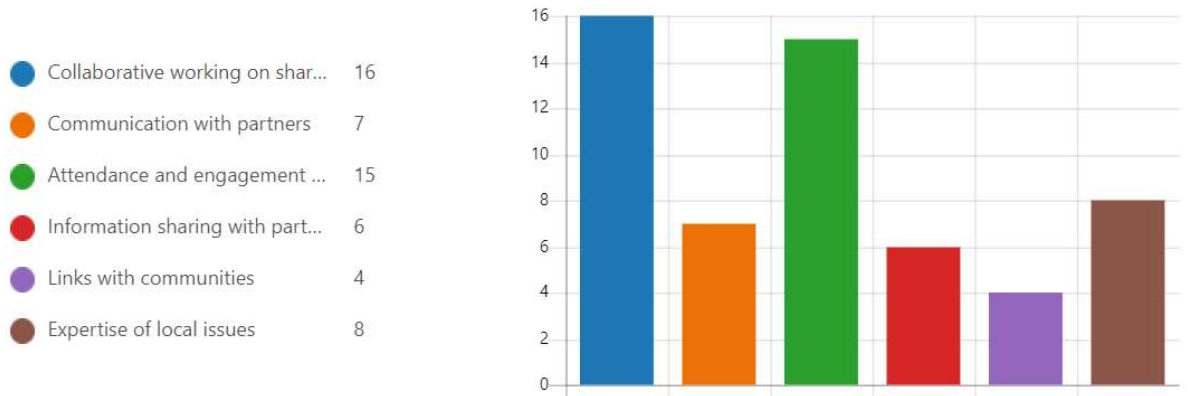
### 2. How would you currently rate partnership working with Thames Valley Police?

● Excellent	13
● Good	28
● Fair	12
● Poor	2
● Very Poor	1



### Question 3: What element of partnership working do you think works best?

3. What element of partnership working do you think currently works best?



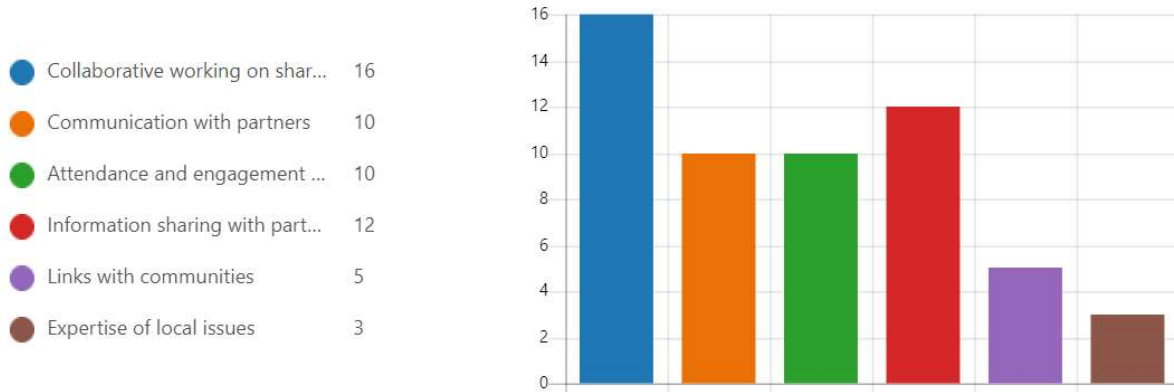
Categories written in full:

- Collaborative working on shared priorities
- Attendance and engagement at partnership meetings
- Information sharing with partners

### Question 4: What element of partnership working do you think could be improved upon most?

The response option that scored the highest in this question (collaborative working on shared priorities) was also the item partners thought could be most improved in Question 3. Information sharing was the second highest scoring, linking with feedback in the qualitative section which showed partners were looking for improved data sharing in an improved or new model in local policing.

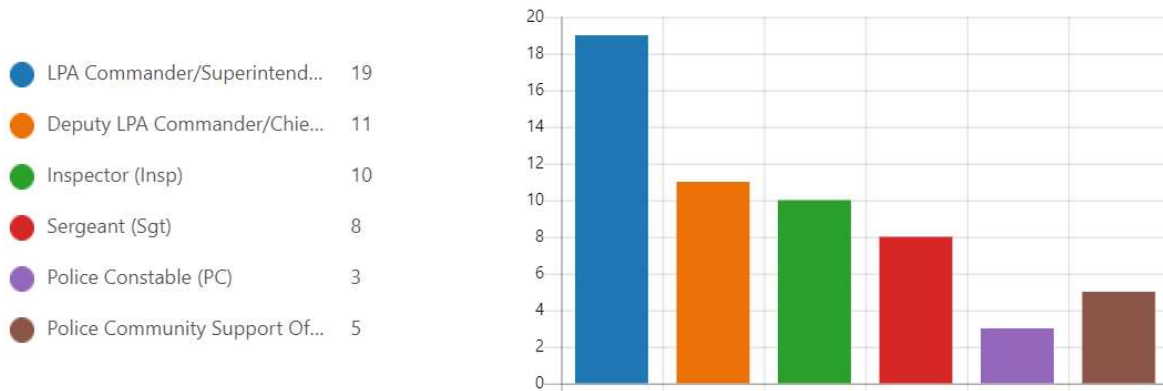
4. What element of partnership working do you think could be improved upon most?



**Question 5: What rank is your main point of contact within local policing?**

The majority of respondents (53%) said the LPA Commander or Deputy Commander was their main contact. This relationship featured in the qualitative and written responses as highly-valued.

5. What rank is your main point of contact within local policing?



**Question 6: Considering a possible five local policing area model, what are possible benefits for partnership working?**

In response to this question, three main themes presented themselves: consistency and collaboration, more resource and better information sharing.

## Consistency and collaboration

Consistency with partner agencies was the most common response to this question. A potential move to five-area command would see the force in line with a range of agencies, including some county councils, fire, probation and health services. Respondents felt there would be greater resilience, alignment and consistency at county boundary level and data could be aligned to make performance reporting more straightforward. Emergency service partners felt the structure could give a clearer single point of contact at a senior level.

Respondents welcomed opportunities to bolster neighbourhood policing and create local leadership within the Domestic Abuse Investigation Unit, as this would *'enable closer collaboration, particularly for our most at risk victims.'*

It was acknowledged by some partners that five area-command model would lead to *'consistency of approach across one county, reducing duplication or great divergence in approaches'*, whilst being *'aligned to our own geographical areas, so possible for different levels of organisations to talk to one another; data would also be aligned, as we would be looking to report performance at same scale'*.

## Resources

More resources, and the flexibility of it, was also identified as a positive by several partners, with particular focus on how this will benefit local communities. *'Increased visible presence of officers at all levels to reduce actual crime'*, *'more resources can move to front line service'* and *'the potential to increase PCSO numbers would be very much welcomed as they are key to work within communities to build community resilience and support local problem solving'* were some of the feedback on how this could benefit residents.

## Information sharing

When identifying how a five-area command structure could be of benefit to working across agencies, the sharing of information was identified as a positive. One partner considered that with a five-area command structure they would *'look at more collaborative working with proactive operations/communication exchange on regular offenders'*.

While these themes were the most common responses to this question, additional themes raised by partners included:

- improved communication
- the ability for greater strategic oversight and reducing duplication that may currently exist.
- It is also acknowledged that some partners felt unable to answer this question due to the limited information available to agencies when surveyed.

## Question 7: Considering a possible five Local Policing Area model, what are the possible drawbacks for partnership working?

Responses to this question focused overwhelmingly on the potential loss of local focus, knowledge, engagement and links into communities.

Within this theme, significant concern was raised about how areas of higher demand could see resources and focus move away from less demanding areas, and that fewer officers could be on the street. Comments included *'the draw toward urban centres is very strong sucking in the majority of resources and diminishing the capacity of the local area to have a focus on the local priorities'* and concerns that *'rural areas would lose out and low crime areas would not see and have the same connectivity with the force leaders.'*

Linked to this, a perceived loss of resource was a further theme identified. Partners shared that there *'could be attempts to make one size fits all work for all local authorities'* which would impact on resource.

*We understand why local policing is so important to our partners, it is very much our focus too. We are seeking to enhance neighbourhood policing and no decisions will be made to the detriment of it. More information on this will be released in our Phase 2 engagement.*

Slower response rates were also raised, feedback included comments such as *'risk of larger geographical areas potentially lowering response rates in rural areas'*.

There were concerns that safeguarding could be compromised if a larger command structure meant a reduction in resource, or change of rank in resourcing safeguarding activities. It was also noted data and information sharing could become too high-level.

*Safeguarding is an important factor in our Review and we can reassure our partners we are considering how we strengthen this as we develop our proposals. Our current safeguarding and harm reduction arrangements differ across our 11 policing areas therefore we are seeking to bring consistency and a structured approach to help us develop best practice across our areas.*

It was also felt a change in area size could also mean the loss of Independent Advisory Group (IAG) members

*We have committed that should our structures change, existing IAG arrangements would stay in place for at least two years.*

## Question 8: Do you have any further comments?



## Further detail

This final question gave partners an opportunity to share any additional thoughts. The most common response was a desire to have more information about the Review, in particular, what any potential move to five policing areas could entail, to support more informed responses.

## Improved communication

Respondents also suggested ways to enhance communication on the Force Review, for example by working with the Thames Valley Community Safety Managers Forum, and noted proposals need time to go through CSPs and council meetings to allow for fuller responses to the survey.

## General

Comments included requests for:

- better sharing of information
- protection of neighbourhood teams
- maintenance of local relationships
- consideration of impacts to Independent Advisory Groups and their engagement opportunities (IAGs)
- Exploring co-location opportunities

Concerns raised included:

- Five LPA detrimental to local policing
- Loss of local engagement and relationships
- Belief that a decision had already been made
- Need for reassurance on safeguarding

There was support from some partners for a five-area command model, noting the 11 LPA model is under resourced.

There were a great many kind comments from our partners which we very much appreciate. Partners said that they value partnership working and ways the review can support this, as well as being wholly supportive of the force. There was praise for the current relationships between local policing commands and their areas. One respondent noted that the people they *'engage with are excellent and a positive force for policing in challenging circumstances.'*

Thank you.

## Appendices

## Appendix 1: Key information about the Force Review

### What is the Force Review?

The aim of the review is to make sure our force is structured in the best possible way so that it can meet current and future challenges.

It began in May 2022 with a focus on finding out whether the current structure, put in place in 2010, was still the right one to deal with the demands of modern-day policing and the challenges put forward from changes in policing and in society.

### Why is it needed?

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 burglary and 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.

### Is this just about saving money?

A savings target was not originally set for the Review, however during 2022 we, like many other organisations, found we needed to make more savings than we had previously planned for. This, combined with uncertainty around future public spending, rising costs from inflation and the need to find a long-term and sustainable way of funding increases to workforce allowances and salaries, meant the Review now needed to incorporate savings into its remit.

While the primary aim of the Force Review is still to make sure we have the right structures in place to deal with our increased demand, meet the challenges presented by changes in policing and society and relieve the pressure on our workforce, it also now has a role in helping us meet our overall force savings target.

### How will this impact local policing?

The driver for this review is about addressing changes in policing and in society so that our force is fit for the future; for our people, our partners and the public we serve. Any changes in structure will allow further investment into frontline service delivery; especially with regards to domestic abuse, serious crime investigation and neighbourhood policing.

### Work so far

Since the project began we have benchmarked our force against six other forces in detail, plus looked at a number of other forces and their best practice. We have also looked at long-term trends and future scenarios in policing, carried out extensive resource modelling and spoken to over 200 officers and staff of all ranks across local policing to understand what works and what doesn't. In October 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:

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

### Decision timeline

This spring, we will be speaking to our workforce, our partners and the public and asking for their thoughts on our two options. Their/your feedback will feed into our proposals and help inform our decision-making. Our Chief Constable's management team will make a decision on a final option in early summer.

## Appendix 2: DCC Hogg letter, July 2022

**Jason Hogg**

Deputy Chief Constable

Thames Valley Police Headquarters

Oxford Road

Kidlington

OX5 2NX

Tel. **01865 541898**

Dear Sir/Madam

### **Protecting your communities: Thames Valley Police review**

As a key partner I am writing to you to let you know I have commissioned work to review Thames Valley Police force structures. The review aims to ensure our force is able to deal with the current and future challenges we face. It will consider local policing (the Local Police Areas we currently use), as well as central crime, criminal justice and intelligence functions. It will seek to address how we manage demand on our force, raised as an issue for improvement in our recent Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection.

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 burglary and 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.

A pivotal part of tackling these emerging issues is the good relationship we have with our many stakeholders and partners. It is of great importance to me that this excellent relationship continues and I am keen to have your thoughts as we progress this review.

#### **What has happened so far?**

Feedback from our own workforce has been our immediate priority. We've been speaking to our frontline teams and leaders, and modelling the demand which so greatly impacts them. We are also meeting with other police forces to see how they are structured and what lessons we might be able to learn.

Over this summer we are also looking at long-term trends in policing, exploring challenges on the horizon and considering how we prepare ourselves to handle these.

#### **What is the timescale for the review and implementation of any recommendations?**

The review began in May 2022 and will report back to the Chief Constable in February 2023. If any changes to the force structure are agreed then they are unlikely to be implemented until much later in 2023.

Can I/my organisation contribute to the review?

Absolutely. At this point we are focusing internally, looking at what has been done before, speaking to our teams and modelling proposals. This initial feedback will go into a draft proposal, which we will bring to you later this year for your detailed review and comment.

While we're keen to make sure capturing feedback from our teams is a priority at this stage we are still very open to early conversations with partners. You are welcome to feed thoughts via your policing contacts or via our email: [forcereview@thamesvalley.police.uk](mailto:forcereview@thamesvalley.police.uk)

Yours faithfully



Jason Hogg  
Deputy Chief Constable

### Appendix 3: DCC Hogg letter to partners asking for feedback (November 2022)

**Jason Hogg**  
Deputy Chief Constable  
Thames Valley Police Headquarters  
Oxford Road  
Kidlington  
OX5 2NX  
Tel. **01865 541898**

23 November 2022

Dear Sir/Madam

Earlier this year I sent a letter informing you of the plan to review Thames Valley Police force structures and I am now able to update you on the progress. In September an interim paper outlining the initial findings of the force review into local policing was presented to the Chief Constables Management Team (CCMT).

Following this meeting, CCMT requested that work focuses on:

- Retaining the current structure of 11 Local Policing Areas (LPAs)
- Moving to a 5 LPA structure

The review team will continue work on these two options and present both to CCMT in February, when a decision will be made.

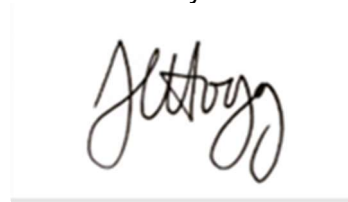
To emphasise to all partners; the review is looking only to enhance the service we provide and no decisions will be made to the detriment of community policing.

We wish to work with partner agencies to seek their feedback on this review. An [online survey](#) has been created to capture your thoughts. Whilst this formal engagement is taking place, we welcome wider thoughts via your policing contacts or via our email: [forcereview@thamesvalley.police.uk](mailto:forcereview@thamesvalley.police.uk)

We value partnership working and recognise how integral this is as part of the service we provide for our communities. Assessing our structure will help us identify long-term improvements for the benefit of our staff, our partners and the public.

An update on the chosen model for local policing will be shared in early 2023.

Yours faithfully



Jason Hogg  
Deputy Chief Constable

Appendix 4: Table showing long list of options

Model	Model advantages	Model disadvantages	Decision
11 LPA model (Current)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Command teams are comfortable with this</li> <li>• Aligns well for partnership working</li> <li>• In most cases works well in line with local authority boundaries</li> <li>• Allows local leadership with workforce</li> <li>• Allows effective decision-making</li> <li>• Allows responsiveness to new and emerging crime issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is under stress</li> <li>• Under resourced to be effective into the future</li> <li>• Lacks resources to respond to surges in public need</li> <li>• May only remain viable with growth of resource</li> <li>• Heavily reliant on Tasking &amp; Resilience to maintain resilience</li> <li>• Small teams in some LPAs can drive disparities in workloads and levels of supervision between LPAs</li> <li>• Has evolved inconsistently between LPAs over the last 10 years</li> </ul>	Continue to review Oct 2022 - March 2023
11 LPA model + forcewide ICR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is working in some other smaller police forces</li> <li>• Aligns well for partnership working</li> <li>• Allows visible local leadership with workforce</li> <li>• Allows responsiveness to new and emerging crime issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Untested in forces similar in geography and operating model to our force</li> <li>• Less local visibility of ICR</li> <li>• Separating command would bring disruption to LPAs</li> <li>• Potential for competing demands placed on ICR</li> <li>• Model unlikely to release capacity to support frontline policing</li> <li>• ICR senior leadership may be less visible</li> <li>• Would have over 1500 officers, creating a large central command</li> <li>• LPA commands would reduce by approx. 50% creating some very small commands</li> </ul>	<b>Discounted</b>
3 or 4 LPA model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would allow provision of local senior detective leadership</li> <li>• Domestic Abuse Investigation Units (DAIU) to have local leadership</li> <li>• Duplicated functions between LPAs could be standardised</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Areas may be too large to manage operationally</li> <li>• Risk that Milton Keynes would draw significant resource out of Bucks to the detriment of local policing</li> <li>• Limited benefits to bringing MK and Bucks together into a single command area and</li> </ul>	<b>Discounted</b>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would allow flex to meet surge demand</li> <li>• Greater internal resilience to manage demands</li> </ul>	Slough together with Reading; both would create higher operational and partnership engagement risk.	
Five LPA model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater resilience</li> <li>• Scalable command teams</li> <li>• Larger command areas would provide better value for money</li> <li>• Would allow provision of local senior detective leadership</li> <li>• Domestic Abuse Investigation Units (DAIU) to have local leadership</li> <li>• Duplicated functions between LPAs could be standardised</li> <li>• Urgent attendance times would improve</li> <li>• Aligns with the future force custody plan</li> <li>• Would increase the ability to provide a consistent approach across the force; but with local flexibility.</li> <li>• Allows relatively quick decision-making</li> <li>• Allows responsiveness to new and emerging crime issues</li> <li>• Would continue good partnership working</li> <li>• Possibility to increase community police officer numbers</li> </ul>	<p>Risk of resource being less demanding areas into and urban areas.</p> <p>Visible presence of senior to workforce may decrease.</p> <p>Large command areas</p> <p>Complexities of ICT</p>	Continue reviewing Oct 2022 - March 2023