

Written evidence submitted by Crest Advisory

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. We set out the context of Crest Advisory's contribution and the research undertaken to make the submission.
2. The context of the evidence in our submission, notably the changing nature of both the types and complexities of crimes being investigated by the police.
3. The context of the introduction of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to inject greater accountability and reconnect policing with the communities they serve.
4. The role of Police and Crime Plans as the public documents setting out the strategic priorities for policing and community safety.
5. Analysis of 2016 Police and Crime Plans published to date in the context of content; priorities; performance measures; public consultation; and broader reform of the criminal justice system (CJS).
6. Focus on policing budgets in the current financial climate under existing and anticipated changes to the funding formula.
7. Increasingly important role for PCCs going forwards, as their role becomes more established.

B. INTRODUCTION

8. Crest Advisory is a team of communications specialists, policy makers, analysts and practitioners dedicated to a single goal: building a safer and more secure society. In recent years, we have worked with central government, police and crime commissioners, police forces, the London Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, the National Police Chiefs' Council, the College of Policing, the Police ICT Company, as well as various NGOs and private companies.
9. The policing landscape has been transformed over the last decade. The last time there was a Select Committee [inquiry](#) into the future of policing, in July 2010, policing priorities were still determined nationally by the Home Secretary. Since 2012, policing

priorities have been set at force level, through the publication of Police and Crime Plans. These documents are defined in the [Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill](#) - they must set out the PCC's priorities for the force as well as an agreed budget. In the absence of a single national statement of policing policy and priorities, they provide a crucial record of how policing is adapting to the shifting demands of the role, including changing crime, shrinking resources and rising public expectations. However, since the first batch of plans was published in 2012/2013, very little analysis has been undertaken into the content of these documents - in particular, how they relate to changing crime and the extent to which they draw upon the views of all parts of society i.e. not only the 'worried safe'. To inform the Committee's inquiry Crest Advisory has undertaken comparative research into the full range of published Police and Crime Plans (to date) and is pleased to submit this as a contribution.

C. CONTEXT

10. In the most recent [police recorded crime statistics](#) and [Home Office](#) data for England and Wales released last month, fraud and cybercrime accounted for half of all crime, recorded knife crime rose by 11%, sexual offences rose by 12% and violence rose by 22%. Meanwhile, demand on police time taken up by complex crimes such as sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation continues to rise. The extent to which these changes are reflected in policing priorities is one of the subjects of this submission.

- 10.1. In the past, the challenge of adapting policing priorities to changing demand would have been picked up by the Home Office. During the early years of the last Labour government, this often meant the imposition of top-down targets. Later, these were scrapped in favour of a single target for public confidence, alongside a core set of 'national entitlements' the public could expect from the police (the so-called 'policing pledge' set out in the 2008 Green Paper '[From the neighbourhood to the national: policing our communities together](#)'). The establishment of PCCs in 2012 swept these processes away.

Rather than priorities being imposed from on high, it is down to PCCs to determine *what* the police prioritise and *how* they should focus their time/resources. The only central direction from the Home Office is given by the [Strategic Policing Requirement](#) (SPR) which stipulates that all forces must fulfil certain responsibilities in tackling the national threats of terrorism, serious and organised crime, cyber security, public order, civil emergencies and child sexual abuse, though considerable latitude is given to how forces fulfil this.

- 10.2. The central premise behind PCCs was the need to inject greater accountability into policing, re-connecting police forces with the communities that they served. Few can doubt that this has at least partially been achieved. Instead of an invisible and remote police authority made up of back-bench councillors, there is now a directly elected individual, with a mandate to cut crime and improve policing. A number of PCCs - Vera Baird in Northumbria and Katy Bourne in Sussex to name just two - have used the power of their office to drive innovation in tackling domestic violence and driving criminal justice reform. The bigger question though, of whether or not PCCs have deepened the level of engagement between police and the public, is still an open question. Public confidence has remained fairly stable over this time - at around 68%, though that masks significant gaps amongst particular groups. In London, for example, although 9 of 10 Londoners agree that the Metropolitan Police is an organisation they can trust, there are significant demographic and socio-economic differences. 61% of 16-24 year olds from a BAME background have confidence that the police do a 'good job' compared to 70% for white 16-24 year olds.

D. POLICE AND CRIME PLANS

11. All 42 PCCs and elected Mayors are required to produce a Police and Crime Plan within one year of taking office. These set the strategic priorities for policing and community safety for the next four years; this includes policing, wider CJS actors and consideration

of victims needs. Given that these are now the only public documents which provide detail about policing priorities, it is perhaps surprising that until now, there has been no attempt to archive or track this vast repository of information. Crest Advisory has collated and analysed the 28 that have already been published as drafts or in their final form. This is set out below.

12. The documents vary considerably in terms of the clarity, level of detail and ambition they contain. To provide a balanced assessment of the plans, we have looked specifically at the following five areas:

- 12.1. Do the priorities identified reflect the changing nature of crime/police demand?
- 12.2. Do the plans contain clear performance measures against which they can be judged?
- 12.3. How extensively have they consulted (or planned to consult) with and/or engaged the public?
- 12.4. How ambitious are they about driving reform across the CJS?
- 12.5. Do they set clear expectations about the police's budget?

Do the priorities identified reflect the changing nature of crime/police demand?

13. The first thing to note is that only a minority of PCCs' plans contain clear strategic priorities to guide resourcing decisions; a greater number highlight very broad priorities, such as 'making communities safer' or 'tackling crime'.
14. Second, very few PCCs prioritise tackling specific crimes in line with the evidence of changing demand. For example, only 6 plans prioritise cybercrime or fraud; 4 prioritise tackling domestic violence; 3 prioritise reducing violence. These figures are set out below.

Priorities contained in Police and Crime Plans (2016)

- 19 prioritise making communities safer/reducing crime
- 15 prioritise a victim focus
- 11 prioritise anti-social behaviour
- 10 prioritise a combined victim focus with protecting the vulnerable
- 8 prioritise protecting all vulnerable groups
- 6 prioritise cybercrime or fraud
- 4 prioritise all forms of sexual abuse
- 4 prioritise domestic abuse
- 4 prioritise supporting young people
- 4 prioritise terrorism
- 3 prioritise combatting violence
- 3 prioritise alcohol
- 2 prioritise knife crime
- 2 prioritise protecting vulnerable children
- 2 prioritise tackling hate crime

Do the plans contain clear performance measures against which they can be judged?

15. Only half of PCCs' plans are (yet) able to articulate a set of performance measures for which they will be held to account and against which the public can judge whether they have succeeded or failed.
 - 15.1. Within that, there are some very good examples. For example, [Essex's plan](#) has a particularly clear and easy to measure performance framework. Beside their priority of *"breaking the cycle of domestic abuse"* they articulate the desired outcome as being *"domestic abuse victims are and feel safer and more perpetrators are brought to justice"* and use *"incidents of domestic abuse (actual and % change), repeat incidents of domestic abuse (actual and % change) and domestic abuse solved rate (%)"* as indicators of performance in this area.
 - 15.2. It is important to stress that many PCCs are developing performance measures to publish at a later date.
16. Also worthy of note is that PCCs are currently dependent on their own police forces to provide the data or knowledge to inform their monitoring of performance. From our

work with PCCs we are aware of challenges some PCCs face in obtaining the data they need to provide more effective oversight.

How extensively have they consulted (or planned to consult) with and/or engaged the public?

17. According to the [Association of Police and Crime Commissioners](#) (APCC), PCCs "*must make arrangements to obtain the views of the local community about matters concerning the policing of the area before the police and crime plan is issued. The Commissioner is also required to obtain the views of victims of crime in particular and have regard to those views when carrying out his/her functions.*" But despite this requirement, our assessment of Police and Crime Plans shows that there is a huge variation in the quantity and quality of public engagement and consultation.

17.1. Consultations often consisted of a combination of public meetings, invited submissions and online surveys. However, most of these online surveys afforded little freedom to contribute meaningfully and few attempts were made to proactively engage harder to reach groups, for example, younger people and/or ethnic minorities. The number of responses to these consultations varies widely - from 100 to 4000.

17.2. Communication is a two-way process. In addition to asking the public what their priorities are, PCCs should also be educating the public about the changing nature of crime/demand within their areas. There are some good examples of such efforts; [MOPAC's plan](#) goes into considerable detail on the changing nature of crime which it cites as evidence to justify its specific priorities. [South Wales' plan](#) includes an effective infographic explaining daily police demand. However, these two examples are in the minority.

How ambitious are they about driving reform across the CJS?

18. The majority of PCCs recognise implicitly that achieving their strategic objectives will involve working closely with the non-policing parts of the CJS, yet very few plans identify specific priorities for improving CJS-wide performance. This may be a reflection of PCCs' lack of hard levers over other parts of the CJS. It may also reflect a lack of confidence. Whatever the causes, it is notable that so few PCCs feel able to use the 'soft' power of their office to get CJS partners around the table and drive reform.

Do they clear expectations about the policing budget?

19. The vast majority of PCCs are committed to raising additional revenue locally to pay for policing via the policing precept.
- 19.1. Two exceptions so far are Warwickshire and West Mercia, who have proposed a freeze to the precept.
 - 19.2. It is worth noting that PCCs are having to operate within an environment of considerable uncertainty, as a result of the delayed funding formula decision by the Home Office. Most are still working off the 2016/2017 assumption that the [Home Office](#) expects PCCs to increase the local council tax precept by an average of 2% each year.
 - 19.3. The average split of central government/precept funding set out in these plans (based on available data) is 68%-32% with Merseyside having the largest proportion funded by central government (83%) and Surrey the lowest (46%).
 - 19.4. Given the fiscal climate, it is unsurprising that a majority of Police and Crime Plans commit to programmes of efficiency savings. 17 PCCs have made value for money or collaborating with other forces and/or services a priority, 12 promise to increase or protect levels of police visibility and 8 are seeking to improve their force's resources - human and/or technical.

E. CONCLUSIONS

20. In the absence of a single national framework for determining policing priorities and policies, the Police and Crime Plans published by PCCs will play an increasingly important role in shaping the way the police respond to changing crime/demand and how we assess their performance.
21. Our analysis of the latest published plans shows that the level of clarity, detail and ambition remains variable¹. In particular, only a minority of PCCs appear to have:
 - 21.1. Set strategic priorities that reflect the changing nature of crime
 - 21.2. Set out clear performance measures against which success can be judged
 - 21.3. A strategy for improving performance across the non-policing parts of the CJS
22. Moreover, it is clear that the way in which PCCs communicate with and engage local communities varies enormously. Too much engagement is narrow, passive and de-contextualised.
23. This is likely to be a reflection of the relative infancy of the role of PCC, rather than on the individuals elected in May 2016. Nonetheless, we believe there is a case for greater support to be offered to PCCs (and their staff) in the development of these plans. In order to provide effective oversight of police performance, PCCs need consistent access to relevant local policing data, knowledge and reporting. Too often, PCCs are forced to 'start from scratch' and/or draft their plans within a vacuum, rather than being able to access a broader network of knowledge based on evidence of what works and/or lessons from regional colleagues. In a world in which policing decisions are more devolved, it is vital that PCCs are equipped with the resources they need to develop plans that enable the police to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

¹ [Analysis](#) of the first batch of these plans, published by Police Foundation in 2013, found a majority of plans mentioned victims (32) and crime reduction (24), followed by crime prevention (19), safety (17), antisocial behaviour (16), vulnerability (13) and justice (13). By contrast, issues such as serious organised crime (three), mental health (2), drugs (2) and fraud (1) received very little attention as headline issues.