

QUESTIONS FROM POLICE AND CRIME PANEL MEMBERS TO THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

Question 1 from Mr. Alan Carter

During the past year, the Sheffield Safer and Sustainable Communities Partnership Board (of which I am a Voluntary Sector representative) has received a series of reports about ongoing partnership work, substantially involving the South Yorkshire Police, designed to take a strategic approach to tackling incidences in South Yorkshire of human trafficking and modern slavery.

From the latest report, I read that delivery of this strategy will be based around ensuring multi-agency working and good communication of issues and concerns, training for front-line staff in spotting the signs of modern slavery and how to report this.

In the meantime, a number of non-governmental organisations working in Sheffield have approached your office for funding to support a countywide modern slavery strategic group.

Is the PCC is sufficiently concerned about the issue of human trafficking and modern day slavery to use his influence to ensure that access to adequate funding may be prioritised to ensure that there are resources sufficient to enable the South Yorkshire Police and their various partners to be able to comprehensively address this apparently growing problem in our communities?

Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery is a growing area of concern and all forces in the UK recognise that.

I am meeting with the non-governmental organisation (NGO) and Force lead on the 16 December to discuss a multi-agency partnership. At that meeting I want to discuss the deliverables one might reasonably expect from such a partnership including, but not limited to, the development of a Countywide Partnership Strategy.

In addition to which I have provided some funding to a NGO to provide training to partner agencies first responders - for example housing officers or similar. The training will be free to access and will in the first instance address some of the knowledge gaps we are aware exist in terms of spotting the signs, understanding responsibilities around and reporting mechanisms for victims of modern slavery.

You are right to say that this is a multi-agency issue and responsibility and I welcome this opportunity to further raise the profile of this heinous crime.

Question 2 from Mr Alan Carter

As Police and Crime Commissioner, would you please advise the Police and Crime Panel on your personal involvement in and influence to date upon the releasing and directing for community benefit of assets seized or recovered from criminals' ill-gotten gains, pursuant to the provisions of The Proceeds of Crime Act 2002?

In particular, could you report upon the extent to which money returned to the public purse from this source assists in aiding good community causes and engaging ex-offenders in activities to benefit the wider community in South Yorkshire?

The Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 ("POCA") sets out the legislative scheme for the recovery of criminal assets with criminal confiscation being the most commonly used power. Confiscation occurs after a conviction has taken place. Other means of recovering the proceeds of crime which do not require a conviction are provided for in the Act, namely civil recovery, cash seizure and taxation powers.

If associated with a criminal investigation / prosecution and conviction this is regarded as an asset in the confiscation process for which the police receive only 18.5% back from the incentivisation fund. In cases of cash seizure, detention or forfeiture the police receive 50% of the amount back through the incentivisation fund.

It is complex and difficult to obtain funds through the Proceeds of Crime Act and can take 5 – 6 years to come through.

Because of these complexities we do not rely on POCA money to fund any particular activities because it is not a stable or consistent funding source.

Question 3 from Councillor Joe Otten

Who do you understand to be ultimately responsible for taking the decision to go ahead with the 17th November police and Amey operation on Rustlings Road, Sheffield, to fell trees in the early hours?

The decision to go ahead with the 17 November operation on Rustlings Road was a matter for Sheffield City Council. As I understand it, this was part of a larger contract to resurface roads and make good pavements that included the felling of some older trees whose roots were affecting street maintenance. If memory serves me correctly, this policy was welcomed by all parties on Sheffield City Council at the time. They wanted a coherent plan to tackle the city's potholes and put the streets and pavements into better order so as to minimise future costs in a time of austerity. The Councillor might like to ask the city council how many claims there were for tripping over poorly maintained pavements in the past few years.

Question 4 from Councillor Joe Otten

It has been claimed that decision for the early start to tree felling was "on police advice". Is this correct and what was that advice?

It would not be the role of the police to tell the local council when to undertake its work, but it would be its role to give an assessment of what the impact might be.

Question 5 from Councillor Joe Otten

It has been claimed that a vehicle containing police dogs was on Rustlings Road for a time on the 17th November. Can you confirm or deny this?

No police dogs were requested, utilised or present during the tree felling exercise on Rustlings Road.

Question 6 from Councillor Joe Otten

A council's powers to close roads and tow vehicles are limited by regulations requiring notification and signage intended to prevent a premeditated ambush of parked cars such as we saw. What are the consequences of police assistance in this aspect of the operation should it be shown to be unlawful?

The road closures as outlined above are the responsibility of the Local Authority. The police only have powers to close in respect of emergencies. Whilst the Local Authority need to secure the road closure orders only the police can enforce them if required. In respect of the operation on the 17th, the police were advised by the Local Authority that road closure orders were in place and would accept this as being the case. Even if it was subsequently discovered that these were not in place or were not lawfully obtained, the fact that the police acted in good faith would negate any liability for the police for any actions taken. The police did not have any involvement in obtaining authorisation for the road closures for the 17th and the removal of vehicles were arranged and undertaken by council contractors. To speak about 'a premeditated ambush' is not helpful and seems designed to heighten emotions in a quite gratuitous fashion. This emotive language was also employed by the MP for Hallam, Nick Clegg, when he spoke about people being 'dragged from their beds' by the police. This undermines trust in the police service and I hope he will think twice before uttering such nonsense in the future.

Question 6 from Councillor Joe Otten

What changes have been or will be made to SYP policy in regards to tree protests as a result of these events?

I have asked the Chief Constable to keep me informed of any operations that might see a repetition of what happened on Rustlings Road and also to ensure, as far as possible, that officers are not drawn into carrying out any activity that properly is a matter for the city council and the contractors – such as knocking on doors to ask people to move their cars.

Question 7 from Councillor Joe Otten

What was the cost (not additional cost, but actual cost of police time etc as normally accounted for) of the police operation on Rustlings Rd on the 17th November?

The resources deployed were all in duty time and no additional costs were incurred. Total staffing time was 72 hours. At £15.47 per hour (mid-level constable rate) this was £1,113.84

Question 8 from Councillor Joe Otten

Do South Yorkshire Police intend to run a 'close pass' initiative to improve the safety of cyclists, similar to the one that West Midlands Police and other forces are now doing?

I am aware of this scheme and only a couple of weeks ago, the Assistant PCC, Sioned-Mair Richards attended a meeting with representatives of Sheffield Cycle groups as well as the city council about this.

Key roads are targeted and police cyclists ride the road. If someone drives too close to them then colleagues, including someone from the local authority waiting ahead are notified and the offending vehicle is stopped and either prosecuted or given education input. A similar scheme is run in Humberside - Operation Achilles applies the same principles except for motorbikes. The educational input is delivered by a local authority representative using an educational mat. The cost of this mat is approximately £900.

Chief Inspector Glen Suttwood has provided me with the statistics from the Safer Roads Partnership concerning collisions involving cyclists in South Yorkshire:-

	CRASH	CJU	CJU
PEDAL CYCLE	<u>2016</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2014</u>
FATAL	1	1	1
SERIOUS	52	45	56
SLIGHT	200	258	275

Clearly one death per year is one too many, however, deaths involving cyclists in South Yorkshire are no where near the levels that they are in the West Midlands or other parts of the country. Whilst it is clear that the scheme has been well received in the West Midlands and is a good approach to tackling a key priority, this needs to be balanced against priorities that are force specific. The main cohorts in relation to road deaths or serious injuries in South Yorkshire are centred on pedestrians and car users - drivers or passengers - where SYP have seen a continual rise over the past 2 years. That said, West Midlands Police are hosting a workshop in Birmingham on 13 January and officers from SYP are looking to attend.

In addition to this, given the challenging demand that the police service is currently facing as a result of austerity, resources are carefully deployed to target specific activity. I understand South Yorkshire Police are not aware of any specific location (s) that is prominent for pedal cyclist Road Traffic Collisions. Neither, have any officers who are trained and equipped in the use of pedal cycles brought any concerns to the attention of Chief Inspector Suttwood.

Enforcement should probably be used as a last resort to improve road safety, the most sensible solution would be to look at addressing the root causes of the problem – one of which is the layout of the roads. By creating segregated or shared cycle/pedestrian routes, improving lighting, awareness and signage, cyclists can use the roads with the confidence that they are safe to do. Some of this is being progressed in the county already:-

Sheffield

- Next development at Meadowhall, segregated cycle route.
- The new Ikea is to have cycle routes and crossings to it, as is the upcoming Charter Square improvements.
- The Connect 2 route is a fairly recent cycle route between Halfway and Killamarsh mainly segregated from traffic.

Rotherham

- Centenary Way and Canklow roundabout have all recently been upgraded to cater for cyclists. A cycle route has been created on the Waverley development to a Highfield Springs.

Doncaster

- A number of crossings have been converted to Toucan crossings along with a new one on Leger Way to link the Bawtry Rd commuter route to town. Also a new cycle lane on Bennethorpe.

Barnsley

- A cycle to work route has been built to service the large Asos factory at Grimethorpe.
- Also a new route is being built currently from the Trans Pennine Trail at Pontefract Rd into the town centre.

Whilst naturally, all force areas will see a decline in cyclists on the roads during the winter, I understand Chief Inspector Suttwood is discussing the prospect of delivering some educational workshops in schools for future drivers and cyclists with local LPTS during Spring 2017 following attendance at West Midlands Police's workshop.

Question 10 from Steve Chu

Does the Commissioner know whether South Yorkshire Police has received any reports of current or historic child sexual abuse connected to professional football clubs, or any other sports clubs? Is it appropriate to seek to review current child protection procedures at local sports clubs? If so, who should do this?

SYP has received 3 reports to date of sexual abuse relating to football clubs – all are historic (one from the 1960s and the other 2 from the 1980s), with only one relating to a professional club, the others are local non-professional clubs.

It would not be appropriate to share further details with the Panel at this time about the on-going investigations. The child protection procedures with sports clubs and other organised activities with children are a matter for the relevant Local Authority or the Local Safeguarding Children's Board.