



Request for decision:

D03-2016

Subject matter: Improving public confidence through the delivery of Mounted Police services to the communities of Gloucestershire

Executive summary:

The paper sets out the delivery of the mounted capability trial within Gloucestershire, with the aim of;

- Improving public confidence
- Enhancing the Constabulary's operational capability and capacity (as required by the Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR))

The outline business case was presented and approved at the PCC Governance Board, the recommendation approved was:

“that a mounted capability be developed within Gloucestershire through creation of a small, specialist team drawn from the current force establishment stabled locally in private facilities (such as Highnam Court).

Authority is requested to develop this outline proposal into a full business case and to commence a pilot to test the concept.”

Following consultation with the Staff Associations and given this is a trial, it was agreed that local officers would not be recruited and trained to undertake the patrols. Instead qualified officers from other forces with mounted units would provide the riders thereby saving the need for local abstraction and training costs should the trial not proceed once evaluated.

The trial builds on the traditional concept of mounted officers serving their communities on horseback using research evidence to show that the presence of mounted officers significantly boosts public confidence in the police across many socio-economic groups.

Within the current landscape of public confidence in the police declining (data generated from Local Policing Survey), reducing police budgets and media influencing public opinion of the police, it is important that we focus our attention on the known drivers of confidence.

Research evidence shows that mounted police can have a positive impact on many of the drivers of public confidence in the police through their activities and presence alone, which includes high visibility urban patrols, community engagement and public order and crowd control. A recent study by the University of Oxford and RAND Corporation found that in neighbourhood settings, mounted police patrols are associated with higher levels of visibility, trust and confidence in the police. Based directly on mounted deployments within Gloucestershire (and London as a comparator site), the mounted police were observed to generate over six times as many instances of casual public engagements – such as greetings and brief exchanges – than officers on foot over equivalent time periods in neighbourhood patrols, thereby improving police visibility and increasing instances of face-to-face communication. In essence, the public are much more likely to stop and talk

to an officer on horseback and the interaction is more likely to be positive, when compared to observations of interactions with officers on foot.

A 'quasi-experiment' in six areas found that provision of mounted police patrols over a one-month period was associated with a significant shift in public opinion. While trust and confidence fell in three sites that did not receive mounted patrols, in the three sites which did experience patrols, public confidence levels were either maintained or slightly enhanced.

(<http://www.rand.org/randeurope/research/projects/mounted-police-uk.html>)

In addition, when deployed at football matches, research suggests that the presence of mounted police has a statistically significant association with the incidence of arrests and the quality of police interactions with the public. Furthermore, in specific instances where coercive crowd control is required, mounted police provide a unique capacity that does not have an obvious equivalent among other available police tools. Evaluation will include assessment of the likely contribution to the Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR) and potential income generation.

It is predicted that with the current situation regarding police budgets and the associated negative media publications (e.g. the recent article regarding the police no longer attending burglaries), confidence in the police is likely to continue to reduce. Research suggests an association between reducing levels of public confidence in the police and increased crime. When the mounted police were in Gloucestershire, there were a number of associated positive articles in the media – both in local press and on the radio. An effective media campaign alongside the launch of a mounted capability trial would create an opportunity to increase public confidence at a time when it is needed most. Additionally, our communities are showing signs of missing the visible profile of neighbourhood officers as we re-distribute our staff according to risk, threat and harm. Given that research shows that mounted police are far more visible, a small capability, carefully tasked into areas of greatest need has the potential to fill the void some communities perceive to be experiencing.

This report sets out the intention to deliver mounted policing within Gloucestershire, with the recommendation being to establish an innovative partnership with a local equine facility that will equip officers to serve the local community on horseback and in so doing, build public confidence.

Authority has been given to develop this concept through to a full business case (with comprehensive evaluation of the costs and benefits) and to trial the concept.

Recommendations (with reasons for that recommendation)

To note the approval of the mounted capability trial by the PCC Governance Board and the updated costs and make comments on any suggestions to maximise the opportunity to improve satisfaction and confidence levels in local policing.

Police and Crime Commissioner

The above request has my approval.

Signed:

Masi

Date: 26 January 2016