



WILTSHIRE POLICE

Police and Crime Commissioner,
Philip Wilkinson.

Chief Constable Catherine Roper
Police Headquarters
London Road
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29 September 2023.

Dear Police and Crime Commissioner, Philip Wilkinson,

I would like to begin this letter to you today with some reflection upon the national coverage with regards to the firearms capability within the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). I will not comment on the specifics, save to confirm that Wiltshire Police – as with all other forces – were asked to temporarily support the MPS with firearms capability. Having met with my firearms teams this week, and working with their line management, we agreed that our own firearms requirements within Wiltshire must and will always be met, however where we have been able to support either in terms of officers or vehicles, then we have done so. It is not unusual for forces to ask for help nationally with specific skills, and we have both provided a range of officers and skills previously to national policing colleagues and indeed have received their support in return. However, to reassure our communities, Keeping Wiltshire Safe will always be the first consideration I make, and this week was no different.

In terms of operational updates, I have previously briefed that Wiltshire Police now has a dedicated Burglary Unit. This was set up to robustly tackle burglary across our county, which is one of my three key operational priorities in support of your Police and Crime Plan. Since the Burglary Unit has been in place (July), we have seen 85 residential home burglaries across the county, which have included attempts, distractions and aggravated offences. The Burglary Unit have made 17 arrests, with 6 offenders charged and remanded - and in one case sentenced - and our outstanding burglary suspects have reduced from 20 to 9. In addition, we are attending over 95% of every report of residential burglaries with a commitment to consistently seeking to reach 100% attendance. There is much more to do, but Wiltshire Police will not tolerate this criminality and will be relentless in tracking our offenders down and bringing them to justice.

Last week was National Rural Crime Awareness Week. Rural Crime is a key delivery area within my Safer Public Spaces priority, with rural communities covering 94% of the geographical make-up of our county, with 80% of the land used for agricultural purposes. Whilst we have seen a rise in rural crime over the last two years – which includes crime such as machinery and agricultural theft, livestock theft, livestock worrying, poaching, criminal damage, arson, heritage crime and wildlife crime, often rural crime is underreported.

Keeping Wiltshire Safe

Acquisitive rural crime has a huge impact on our farming and rural communities and so this week of action was really important in terms of not only raising awareness of rural crime and how to report it, but also supporting our rural communities with crime prevention advice and enforcement activity. Over the week we saw our Neighbourhood teams conduct daily rural patrols, engagement with our rural communities to increase sign-up to our Farm Watch scheme and made a number of arrests of hare coursers. We also conducted a night-time operation in the east of the county - supported by farmers and game keepers – and conducted spot checks on vehicles for illegal waste and scrap metal haulage alongside Wiltshire Council Enforcement Officers. We have also seen increased TV and radio reporting across the county, along with increased engagement across our social media channels on rural crime related content. I thank everyone who has been involved and I hope our rural communities have seen the impact.

To take our approach to rural crime one step further, it is extremely welcome to see us implementing collective action as a South West group of PCCs and Police Forces to tackle this issue, under the leadership of Wiltshire Assistant Chief Constable Mark Cooper. We are committed to a collective intelligence led approach to tackle the most serious and organised criminals who are conducting rural crime. This is a significant step forward, and I believe will yield significant results.

On the subject of collaboration, over the coming weeks the South West Forces and PCCs will be focusing our collective resources to disrupt drug related crime in the next phase of [Operation Scorpion](#). This phase, which will be led by Wiltshire Police, will not only be targeting increased disruption, but will also ensure young people – and their families - are being warned about the dangers of drug related exploitation and how to spot the signs. It is a common misconception that organised crime only happens in big cities. The reality is that it is happening in local communities, across local borders, national and internationally – causing irrevocable harm and disruption to our communities. Often this type of crime is linked with an increase in violence, anti-social behaviour, theft and other drug related offences. Gangs often target vulnerable people, including children, who they groom, coerce or force to carry the drugs and deal on their behalf. They are often in dangerous situations and subjected to violence. We have produced some guidance around how to spot the signs of exploitation in young people which our communities [can find here](#) as we collectively need to do everything we can to keep our young people safe.

We will be talking much more about Operation Scorpion over the coming weeks, but for now, may I use this letter to urge our communities that it is more important than ever that you continue to report information to us about any activity in your neighbourhood that may seem suspicious. Your piece of intelligence could be the missing piece in the jigsaw to help us identify criminal activity in your community. Also tell us if you are concerned about someone being involved in drugs and drug dealing and you are worried about their safety. We want to help protect people from harm. This is a problem which can affect the whole community and we need your help to tackle it. It is not all about enforcement and prosecution - whether they are a child or adult, we can assist them in getting the help and support they need. There are a number of ways you can report information:

Keeping Wiltshire Safe

- Call 999 in an emergency
- Call 101 to report all other information
- Visit our website: www.wiltshire.police.uk
- Call Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111
- Through the young people's website www.fearless.org

By working together, we will send the clear message that the South West is No Place For Drugs.

Last week, I attended my second Police Performance Oversight Group as Chief Constable of Wiltshire Police. This group is responsible for evaluating the progression by forces who have been placed into the HMICFRS Engage status. It was a hugely constructive and valuable meeting. Chaired by the Chief HMI Andy Cooke, it was acknowledged that we have made progress in developing the appropriate strategic framework for the Force, and now we need to collectively drive the improvements in our service that continue to be of concern. We remain in 'Engage' and I believe that is entirely right for the Force at this time. I will be publishing a fuller update to our communities over the coming days.

Over the last fortnight, I have continued my tour of area boards across the county, having had the pleasure of attending Bradford On Avon, Devizes, Chippenham and South West Wiltshire. I would like to say 'thank you' to them for the invites. One of the greatest privileges of my role is meeting members of our communities. I am pleased to have heard similar feedback from these recent meetings that the public are seeing and feeling the increased visibility of policing in our county. I am also hearing where our communities feel we need to improve and I am very grateful for this feedback too. I look forward to attending more public meetings over coming weeks.

Last Saturday, I also had the absolute joy of attending the BBC Radio Wiltshire 'Make a Difference' awards with the Head of our Neighbourhood Harm Reduction Unit, Jenn Holton. It was truly inspiring listening to how members of our communities have helped and supported each other, and congratulations to all those nominated for awards. On Sunday, I also represented Wiltshire Police at the Annual Police Memorial Awards, which was held this year in Cardiff. It is truly humbling to pause and remember those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the course of their duties. Their memory lives on.

Kindest regards,



Catherine Roper
Chief Constable, Wiltshire Police