

**Presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (meeting as the Crime and Disorder Committee) on 14/03/2018 by Chief Inspector Ian Gennery.**

**Maldon DC March 2018**

Over 72% of the Essex Police area is classified by the Office of National Statistics as “rural”.

Certain types of crime/incidents are more common in rural areas and some crimes, such as agricultural machinery theft are almost uniquely rural.

The impact of crime and disorder on victims and communities can be greater in rural areas where there are fewer local amenities and support services and people can feel more isolated and vulnerable.

Despite the consistent fall in the overall level of recorded crime in the last 10 years, it is has been evident at engagement events such as;

- Farmers' Action Panels
- the PCC's Rural Crime Forum
- and via public correspondence

that people within rural communities believe

- that crime is rising
- that rural policing is being sacrificed in favour of urban areas
- and feel increasingly insecure within their own neighbourhood

Difficulties with 101, a perceived lack of understanding by the police of rural crime and a decrease in visible policing have deterred crime reporting with members of the rural community demonstrating the attitude of:

**“what’s the point in reporting it?”**

This was confirmed by anecdotal evidence from the National Farmers Union via member meetings and similar input from the Country Landowners' Association and the volume of complaints being received at district level and via the OPCC.

The 2015 **National Rural Crime Survey** highlighted;

- the **financial impact** of crime on the rural economy
- the **fear of crime** as increasing
- a **low satisfaction** rate of police performance in rural areas

- and crime in these areas as **underreported**.

**The NFU Mutual Rural Crime Report 2017** identified the cost of rural crime in 2016 to be **£39.2m**

The PFCC for Essex has acknowledged these issues since the post was introduced and the PFCC's Rural Crime Forum has been in place for over 5 years.

This forum brings together the police, key partners and the rural community to look at the specific issues affecting these areas and identify actions to address them.

The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) recognises the impact of rural crime and has Wildlife and Rural Crime portfolios led by senior officers in conjunction with expert partners and the national NPCC **Rural Affairs National Strategy 2018 – 2021** is currently being finalised with a view to an official launch in July.

Essex Police has been strongly involved in the development of this strategy due to our focus on rural crime, including the development of our own strategy.

Our own and the draft national strategy have the following aims;

- Safer rural communities
- Enhanced public engagement
- Increased public confidence in the police
- Empowered communities
- Strong partnership working
- Raised profile of rural affairs
- Embedded rural focus into policing culture

Essex Police has had a Rural Crime Prevention Strategy since 2013.

It was written by the police for the police and although it acknowledged the role of partnerships such as Community Partnerships and Farm Watch, there was no involvement by partners in its development.

The Strategy was scheduled to be updated **last** year (2017) and we saw this as an opportunity to involve the support and guidance of our rural communities and key partners led by the Essex Rural Partnership to inform the way in which we tackle crime and ASB in our rural environment.

**Our Vision**, contained in the strategy is to **actively strengthen our response to fighting crime in rural areas through the effective use of;**

- policing resources
- partnerships
- and working **with** our rural communities

**Crime Prevention is everybody's responsibility and this strategy reflects that principle**

By working together and through consultation with other key partners, Essex Police, the ERP and the OPFCC have established our aims and our priorities

**Our aims** are:

- to reduce the volume of crime and ASB being committed in rural areas
- to continue to bring offenders to justice
- to increase public confidence in Essex Police

Needs and issues for **communities, businesses** and the **environment** are different and **our priorities** reflect this, and include;

### **Communities**

- visible and accessible policing; having a recognised place to go for advice/reporting
- maintaining a police and volunteer presence in rural areas
- recognising the exaggerated impact of crime caused by isolation
- working to address speeding and road safety
- working to provide an effective and efficient 101 service

### **Businesses**

- Recognising the impact of theft (of vehicles and equipment) on business operations and finances in rural communities

### **Environment**

- Working to reduce ASB and fear of crime and improve personal safety
- Working to deter and detect fly tipping
- Working to deter and detect Hare coursing

We will achieve our aims by **means** of:

- innovative problem solving
- devising practical solutions to identified local problems
- effective partnership working

- supporting victims of crime
- improving crime prevention

And trying to do some of that in different ways, for example; **Operation Buzzard** brings together traditional police work and new technology, using our drones to deal with unlawful traveller encampments and hare coursing.

Rural Crime is often thought of in terms of theft of;

- plant
- livestock
- metal
- oil
- or damage to property

however our strategy incorporates **all crime** and the wider issues impacting on rural communities.

There is no National definition of Rural Crime, accordingly the definition varies considerably between police services.

The Essex Police Strategy considers Rural Crime to be:

***Any crime committed in a rural location, or where the victim is specifically targeted because of their connection to, or involvement in, the rural community, economy, or area.***

By clearly **defining** rural crime we will be able to fully understand the

- Volume
- Distribution
- nature
- and frequency

of these offences and compare our performance against our most similar forces.

Through **analysis** of this data we will be able to focus our resources into the areas of greatest need and develop innovative solutions to tackle the issues.

**Our Teams** will engage with our repeat and vulnerable victims, offering advice, support and developing crime prevention and reduction plans to enhance public confidence and satisfaction in areas that have historically considered themselves neglected in favour of urban centres.

Through focused, visible policing at a local level, we will:

- reassure rural communities
- deter crime
- gather (and share) intelligence
- bring to justice those who commit crimes in rural areas

This strategy has been informed by consultation with a variety of stakeholders

As a result of this consultation, we will place particular focus on:

- continuing to work closely with partners
- developing Farm and Rural Watch
- continuing to host Rural Crime Awareness Days and similar events
- making the best use of established and new communication links
- enhancing our use of **social media** to share intelligence and good practice
- working closely with Community Safety Partnership Hubs
- maximising the benefits and opportunities of volunteering and community involvement
- sharing Intelligence and good practice with enforcement agencies and other partners.
- developing a public-facing rural publication which brings together advice and information pertinent to rural areas (**This document which was created with the assistance of the PFCC's Rural Crime Forum has already been created**)

We launched the strategy at a very well supported event in November 2017 at Stow Maries Aerodrome.

The strategy is led by the Local Policing Support Unit (LPSU) which is the HQ department that the new Gypsy Traveller and Rural Engagement Team (GTRET) sits within.

Historically, we were one of the few comparable forces to have no full time Rural Policing Team.

Of 53 Police services<sup>1</sup>, only 13 have dedicated rural teams (including Essex) and we **now** have one of the largest as in October 2017, with the support of the OPFCC and the personal support of the Chief Constable, we established the

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<sup>1</sup> The 43 home office forces in England and Wales, the British Transport Police, Civil Nuclear Constabulary, Guernsey, Isle of Man, Jersey, MOD police, RAF Police, Royal Navy Police, Police Service of Northern Ireland and Police Scotland.

G-TRET to support delivery and enhance our existing work with our rural communities.

The team consists of 1 Sergeant and 4 Constables, including the existing Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Officer (Sgt Downes) and existing Wildlife Heritage and Rural Crime Officer (PC Long) and we are working with the Special Constabulary and members of the PFCC's Rural Crime Forum to recruit, initially, 4 Special Constables to support the work of the Team.

The Team works 7 days a week and **works closely with Community Policing Teams** in each district to tackle crime and ASB in rural communities.

It is notable that since the launch of the strategy and the new team, Essex has fallen from **3<sup>rd</sup>** (where it has been for 3 years) to **7<sup>th</sup>** in the national table of theft of farm equipment.

We will also, via the Citizens in Policing Team, support the **increased use of volunteers** such as Active Citizens drawn from, and working within, our rural communities.

Creating and launching the strategy is obviously only the start.

Delivery and implementation of the strategy will be supported and assisted by;

- working with partner organisations,
- using established relationships
- and by developing new ones

Delivery will utilise the support of, and consult with, key partners to influence future direction and delivery of the strategy particularly:

**1. The Rural Crime Forum (RCF)** which is chaired by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC).

This forum will monitor the strategic developments in line with the Rural Crime Strategy and act as a conduit between the rural community, the PFCC and the Police.

**2. The Essex Rural Partnership (ERP)**

which is a non-statutory body, working to raise the profile of rural Essex at a local, national and EU level.

The ERP brings together a wide range of organisations from

- the public
- private
- and voluntary sectors,

to coordinate action on the major economic, social and environmental issues facing rural Essex.

The ERP has been a significant contributor to the development of this strategy and will be a key partner in its successful delivery.

We will work with partners and key stakeholders in public and voluntary sectors to address rural crime in Essex via a nationally recognised methodology the 4 key elements of;

- 
- **Prevention**
  - **Intelligence**
  - **Enforcement**
  - **and Reassurance**
- 

which are detailed in the strategy.

We have also considered future and emerging challenges such as

- Funding and Resources
- the growing population of Essex
- and the changing nature of crime

and these are detailed in the strategy.

**We will measure the success of this strategy across 4 key areas:**

1. The number of positive disposals for rural crime
2. A reduction of repeat victims of crime in rural areas.
3. Conducting masterclasses with partners/ other forces to identify “what works”
4. A measurable increase in public satisfaction

we will also expect success to be recognised through:

- the provision of crime prevention advice available to rural communities
- an increased confidence in policing rural areas
- a decrease in the value of rural crime (NFU Mutual report)

- increased engagement and membership of Farm and Rural Watch schemes
- the amount of shared intelligence and identified best practice

Partnership working has been key to developing the strategy into the product we have today.

To deliver the strategy we need to continue to work in partnership

At the launch of the strategy, the Chief Constable promised

- Visible
- Targeted
- proactive policing

and asked for the public to help by reporting incidents and take steps to prevent themselves from becoming victims of crime through a variety of means from basic security measures to joining farm and rural watch schemes or by volunteering as Special Constables, active citizens or watch coordinators

We would like to use this meeting to explore how the partners here today can work with us to give the best result for the rural communities of Essex and those who work in and visit them.