

Community Overview & Scrutiny Panel
1st February 2021
Local Policing Team Update, Ch. Insp. Mark Thorley - Neighbourhood Policing
Team Commander

This 12 months compared to the last Year to Date December 2020.

Whilst I will provide my traditional summary of crime and ASB data I will start by saying that this year has been a year like no other. Coronavirus, and the three national lockdowns it has generated, led to many changes in the demand generated for the Moorlands Neighbourhood Policing Team.

Last year, I reported a 15% reduction in recorded crime. This year, I am pleased to report further crime reductions but add that whilst some is down to the hard work of my team some is also a direct consequence of the impact Coronavirus has had on our community.

All crime

Moorlands - down 10 %
407 Less crimes

Incident demand (calls for service).

Moorlands - down 3 %
495 fewer calls for service

Crimes across all crime groups have reduced with the exception of “other violence”, this is a group made up of many offences which shows an increase in three main areas, that being Stalking, Harassment and Malicious Communications. The increase seen in “other violence” is up 14% and equates to 175 more crimes than the previous year, 1,410 – 1,235.

With regard to the three crime types mentioned this does not, as may be assumed, directly relate to significant increases in domestic abuse but can often be attributed to such as neighbour disputes and social media disagreements.

Domestic abuse across the Moorlands has overall seen a 3% reduction which equates to 47 less incidents reported. We have also seen reductions in domestic abuse repeat victims and perpetrators.

Burglary residential, Last year I reported a reduction of 12%, this year sees further reductions of 22%, (33 less offences).

Criminal damage, Last year a 21% reduction, this year a further reduction of 14% (89 less offences).

Theft from a Motor Vehicle, Last year a 40% increase, this year a reduction of 34% (54 less crimes).

Theft of motor vehicles, Last year a 9% increase, this year a reduction of 24% (18 less crimes).

It should be noted that as ever, a small percentage of offenders can be responsible for a disproportionate number of crimes, as has been seen in Leek recently, with two men and a small number of people in Cheadle during the summer of 2020. It has been the case that despite the Police bringing these repeat offenders to justice, the impact of Coronavirus on the court system and prisons has meant delays in sentences that would previously have taken less time.

We continue to identify and target these repeat offenders, not only to prosecute where appropriate but to also work with them to try and divert them away from offending by working with partners to address the negative influences they may have in their lives that lead them to commit crime, such as substance abuse, homelessness, or blockages to receiving benefits.

We have also worked closely with our partners to identify and utilise alternative ways by which to end offending such as house closure orders, evictions and civil remedies to great effect.

Early in the year during the first lockdown we saw a noticeable reduction in travelling criminals coming to the Moorlands to commit crime as few people were using the roads. This problem though has since returned and we have unfortunately started to see offenders from such places as Stoke on Trent and Derbyshire travel into the Moorlands to commit crime again.

We continue to successfully police this by proactive patrols, retrospective investigations and use of analytical tools to predict crime trends and then evidentially support prosecution

ASB

Moorlands – 10% reduction (194 fewer incidents)

Again a very different year with the implications Covid has brought, historically ASB drivers would be rowdy and inconsiderate youths or similar, whilst we did see some of this early during the summer in places such as Werrington it has not been as previously experienced.

Whereas this year we have seen an increase in reports of ASB as a consequence of Covid restrictions, such as groups gathering, concerns around those who may not be self-distancing, neighbours having visitors they shouldn't etc.

Road traffic collisions

There continues to be reductions in those killed or seriously injured on the roads of the Staffordshire Moorlands with consistent reductions over the past two years. Currently there is a 43% reduction in collisions classed as Killed or seriously injured, two people died on the Moorlands roads during the last year, the same number as the year before, but there have been ten less collisions resulting in serious injury. We have this year benefitted from the support of the Road Policing Team who are frequent visitors to the Moorlands holding many days / evenings of action to target driving offences and the use of our roads by criminals.

Incidents of note

We have had two racially motivated incidents of note this year, the abhorrent abuse of a Taxi driver which was recorded and published on social media, and the racially motivated abuse of a young male in Leek town centre the night the pubs opened after the first lock down. Such crimes remain an exception for the Moorlands and I have not seen any increase in racially motivated crimes in the Moorlands.

Reassuringly both of these crime mentioned were promptly investigated, the victims supported and a speedy conviction for the incident in the town centre and the person charged with racially abusing the taxi driver due in court soon.

Late summer in the Biddulph area we experienced a brief series of drug related violent incidents which were quickly addressed by use of surge Policing tactics.

Those identified as being involved were targeted for searches, positive Police action was taken at any incident in which they were involved, and some great partnership work was undertaken simultaneously to address vulnerability, protect children associated to the violence and where necessary remove children and evict those who failed to heed warnings that continued ASB and drug related incidents attributed to them could lead to eviction.

Annual overview

Policing during a worldwide pandemic has been, and continues to be challenging, however the Moorlands Policing team continues to work hard, not only to reduce crime and ASB, but also this year working hard to protect, support and advise the community regarding Covid, and where necessary applying the new Covid specific laws.

Covid has understandably presented new Policing demands such as responding to reports of breaches of the legislation, addressing the communities concerns generated by gatherings in public spaces, the enforcement of track and trace orders to self-isolate, proactively patrolling to ensure compliance by those business premises instructed to close, and many other Covid related demands to protect the community and reduce the demand on the NHS by limiting the spread of the virus.

The closure of Public houses and restaurants led to town centres presenting very different demands with frequently little night time economy and, as a positive consequence, a reduction in the usually associated violence and disorder, but at other times a busier day time economy with many visitors.

We have consistently seen visitors to our rural beauty spots increase in numbers never experienced before. This has presented issues which, though often not Police related, have impacted greatly on Police resources, that being parking issues, reports of littering, reported lack of social distancing etc. We have worked closely with our council partners, Peak Parks, Rangers and local enterprise to address and target these issues.

I have asked for, and have seen, my staff take a very pragmatic and common sense approach to Covid enforcement. Our role through all of this has been to engage with the community to explain the Covid legislation, only using enforcement where necessary, a difficult balance, which I believe has been achieved in the Moorlands as well as, if not better than, most areas.

So, a year very different to any other I have ever Policed before, one that has at times been really challenging for my team and I, but one during which I have seen partners and ourselves pull together like I have not seen before, and for most of the time seen a greater community spirit than has been seen for many years.

Resources.

I have 21 Neighbourhood Police Constables, I currently carry two vacancies.

I have a team of 18 PCSO's.

I have four NPT Sgts.

I have 2 Investigating Officers (IO's) though I have one who is unfortunately currently long term sick.

I have a Vulnerability coordinator who works within the harm reduction hub at Leek.

As part of the directorate policing model our response Policing continues to be supplied from a central hub at Hanley who move to deployment locations across the Moorlands at the start of their tour of duty.

The NPT is led by myself.

Ch. Insp Mark Thorley.