

In March 2023 we asked you for feedback on our proposals to change the structure of local policing in Thames Valley Police.

Feedback predominantly focused on these areas:

1. Visible policing
2. Local knowledge
3. Reducing drug crime and anti-social behaviour among children and young people
4. Decision-making
5. Resources drawn into bigger cities/towns
6. Value of community policing and local intelligence
7. Learning from previous restructures/other forces/organisations mistakes
8. Roads policing

Below you will find our response to these themes.

Visible policing

Our decision to move to five Local Command Units (LCUs) will double the number of police constables in Neighbourhood Policing.

We have 108 Neighbourhoods across the Thames Valley and this will not change. A move to a larger geographical area will not mean a loss of neighbourhood policing resources. These will remain the same, and in some places, enhanced, as a result of our proposals.

We will keep the same number of Neighbourhood teams and double the number of officers in visible patrol roles.

Local knowledge

The increased resource in Neighbourhood Teams, together with a central community policing programme led by a Superintendent, will re-establish neighbourhood policing at a local level. This will increase the opportunities to engage with local communities and will bring the police closer to the community they serve. Most existing relationships with Neighbourhood Inspectors and Sergeants will not change.

We will maintain many of the same units, such as Neighbourhood policing, including all 108 Neighbourhood Teams, Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Priority Crime Teams, and Incident and Crime Response Teams.

Based on our current resource allocations, no neighbourhood area will see any reduction in the number of PCs and most will see increases, helping to deal with local crime and engaging with their local community.

Reducing drug crime and anti-social behaviour among children

As part of our move to five Local Command Units (LCUs) 20 officers will have roles within schools across the force. This will provide opportunity to build stronger relationships with educational establishments and children and young people.

Under this new structure each area will have a dedicated proactive team, who will use a variety of tactics to target those posing the greatest threat to the community, such as those who carry weapon and knives, as well as county drug lines.

Decision-making

Our decision to move to a new model was made once we had received and considered feedback from our people, our partners and the public. We received almost 500 responses to our survey earlier this year and would like to thank everyone who responded.

Resources drawn into bigger cities/towns

We have 108 Neighbourhood teams across the Thames Valley and this will not change. Our proposals will also see the number of officers in Neighbourhood policing double, meaning more officers will be out and visible in their local community.

A key responsibility for our Incident Crime Response (ICR) teams is to respond to 999 calls. The allocation of incident response resources will be based on demand modelling, which is currently being reviewed.

However, moving to a five-area command model will mean more officers based across our neighbourhoods, which could reduce overall response times. Further modelling of response times (e.g. time from a 999 call to officers attending the incident) under a five-area model is ongoing.

Under a five-area model, each area will have a dedicated proactive team, who will use a variety of tactics to target those posing the greatest threat to the community, such as those who carry weapon and knives, as well as county drug lines.

Value of community policing and local intelligence

We are committed to local policing. The move to five Local Command Units will strengthen our Neighbourhood Team numbers will enable them to build stronger relationships with communities to identify and address issues raised earlier and get ahead of harm, such as anti-social behaviour, mental health, domestic abuse and exploitation.

Learning from previous restructures/other forces/organisations mistakes

Some feedback related to previous structures in our force. The new five area model is not a return to the force's Basic Command Units (BCUs). The only similarity is geographical; the internal structures being proposed will be substantially different.

We have carefully reviewed the Casey Report, the review into the standards of behaviour and internal culture of the Metropolitan Police Service (Met), against our force proposals. We have concluded that the size of our force (5,000 officers) compared to the Met (34,500) means our proposed structural change to a five-area command unit is not comparable to the structural changes the Met made in 2018. Thames Valley Police is much smaller and therefore the proposed five-area commands would each be significantly smaller than the Met Basic Command Units (BCUs).

The review has carefully looked at the Met's approach and a number of other different forces to identify the right size for police areas.

Roads Policing

A number of respondents raised issues around speeding, young people, driving recklessly, motorbikes and scooters. Road Policing does not fall under this review, but we will pass comments along to our Joint Operations Unit.