SUFFOLK CONSTABULARY

Status Review of PCC Plan Objective 1 – 'Responding to Emergencies'

1.   INTRODUCTION

1.1   Significant work has been undertaken to enhance the work of the CCR over the past months

1.2   Despite there being an increase of 4,391 calls (11.5%) above the 4 year average in the 12 months to 30/6/16, Suffolk Constabulary still managed to achieve the national target.

1.3   During this same period there was an 11.2 % increase in 101 calls, equating to 9,935 calls. The average wait time for callers to 101 was just under 4 minutes.

1.4   The Contact and Control Room (CCR), which includes Central Call Answering (CCA), handles on average 271,195 calls per year. This equates to on average 228 emergency 999 calls and 515 non-emergency 101 calls per day.

1.5   The Police and Crime Plan measure to answer 90% of 999 emergency calls within 10 seconds has been consistently achieved by Suffolk CCR by prioritising the calls and using ring fenced staff to handle them.

1.6   Hitting the target to answer 80% of 101 non-emergency calls within 20 seconds has proved challenging and whilst the Chief Constable recognises the importance of timely call answering for both emergency and non-emergency calls, he has sought review of this target.

2.   BACKGROUND

2.1   Whilst not a measure in the Police and Crime Plan, Suffolk Constabulary seek to answer 80% of 101 non-emergency calls within 20 seconds.

2.2   Performance relating to 101 call handling has been reported on as part of the Accountability and Performance reporting since 2014. This was in order to draw attention to a trend of increasing demand.

2.3   The Chief Constable has made clear the answering of 999 emergency calls and emergency response will always be the priority within the CCR.

3. CURRENT DEMAND

3.1 **999 Calls**
- July 2016 saw a peak in demand with **9,217** emergency calls.
- This equates to **297** of such calls per day.
- Over the last three years, the month of July has seen an average daily number of 999 calls of **260**.
- This compares to a much lower daily average of **228** calls since April 2013.

3.2 **101 Calls**
- July 2016 also saw a peak in demand with **19,047** non-emergency calls.
- This equates to **614** of such calls per day.
- Over the last three years, the month of July has seen an average daily number of 101 calls of **576**.
- This compares to a much lower daily average of **515** calls since April 2013.

3.3 There are no clear reasons identified for the current rise in demand above the expected seasonal increase usually seen over the summer.

4. CCR IMPROVEMENT PLAN

4.1 The Chief Constable has commissioned a piece of work to address the performance issues within the CCR. An action plan has been developed in order to improve performance and to prevent future staffing levels from becoming critical. The action plan services four key deliverables:

  i. Identify organisational demand
  ii. Identify resourcing requirements and deliver a match to demand
  iii. Maximise improvement to performance above target
  iv. Review and recommend improvements to culture, leadership and ownership for performance

4.2 In order to achieve these deliverables, a structured approach is being taken:

4.3 **Phase 1 – Fill existing vacancies**.

There are currently 14 Call Taker vacancies within the CCR. Vacancies were held in the control room to accommodate the planned reduction in PCSO numbers and provide and alternative option to staff rather than redundancy and also to utilise the years of experience they had within policing. Due to changes in the Government austerity plans, the Constabulary were able to recruit more police officers and a number of PCSO's were successful in joining as constables. Whilst of great benefit to the organisation and individuals, it meant the vacancies remained. The recruitment process was carefully timed to ensure the impact of tutoring the new staff did not compound the known pressures the summer brings on the control room and was started before the summer period. Whilst there are vacancies for just 14 members of staff, offers of employment have been given to 23 applicants who were successful in the selection process. This has been underwritten by the PCC who has agreed this money can be taken from reserves should the constabulary not be able to meet the cost from the existing budget by year end.

4.4 **Phase 2 – Maximising the use of Technology**.

STORM

There are prioritised improvements to the command and control system - STORM with auto tagging of CAD's, auto arrival time for police units and auto SMS updates to certain callers all of which will have a positive impact on performance.

Website

The new website is now up and running and is optimised to ensure its ease of use and functionality. The system has been designed to build further functionality such as a 'virtual 101 operator' and all of these opportunities will now be explored to introduce those functions that provide the most effective solutions. Such innovations will reduce demands on the control room by providing an effective alternative for those who prefer on line solutions.

The new website is designed to provide more services to the public and increase online accessibility – with an investment being made in sites that are flexible, adaptable and secure, with the ability to continuously grow as new areas and functions are added.

The new Suffolk Constabulary website delivers the following functionality

- Report lost property
- Report found property
- Report a minor road traffic collision
- A mobile responsive site
- Report a crime online

The following will be delivered shortly

- Payments online for firearms licensing and subject access
- Road Traffic update

Phase 2 will deliver

- SARC Microsites
- Youth Microsites
- Online forms for Claire's law and Sarah's Law
- Find your police station map - A map that shows stations with public enquiry hours and their opening hours as well as details of stations that have emergency phones. The map will have the ability to direct users to the closest station
- Add posts from Instagram

IP Telephony

This enhancement will enable better flexibility of the resource within the control room. For example, call takers and dispatchers will be able to support each other though crossing over during period of peak demand, this cannot be done with the existing system.

Joint Front Door Call Answering with Partners

A scoping exercise is currently underway to identify the types of calls coming into the Control Room, because often they are calls intended for our partners rather than requiring a police response. Initial scoping shows that a large proportion of callers require the services of partners and either are unaware of the correct contact details or believe the role to be carried out by the police, e.g. noisy neighbours, lost dogs, highway damage etc. In partnership with Suffolk County Council and the District and Borough Councils, the proposed work aims to place individuals from other agencies alongside control room operators to ensure that people in crisis receive the correct support at first point of call and that vulnerable people can access support at a single point, ie. a 'joint front door' service.

Making the Right Call
A public information campaign has recently been launched to help members of the public make the right call when they need help or advice. Supported by a series of social media posts, the Make the Right Call campaign aims to signpost people to the correct agency for a number of commonly asked questions, saving time for callers and protecting police resources. In an emergency, the public are being advised to always dial 999. If a crime is in progress or if there is a threat to life, the advice is to call immediately and to receive an urgent response. Alternatively, for non-urgent police matters the advice is to dial 101. The number is available 24/7 and is for reporting less-urgent crime, to speak with someone about an incident already reported, or to contact a specific police officer or member of staff.

The Constabulary's new website features a wealth of easy to access information, which will help users source the help and support they may need. It includes advice and guidance on crime prevention and safety, enables users to report crime and directs them to the appropriate channel or organisation so they know who to call.

4.5 **Phase 3 – Analysis of demand**

The Joint Performance and Development Department have been tasked with data analysis to assess the current demand placed upon the control room.

4.6 **Phase 4 – Data Analysis – Resources**

Data from phase 3 will be used to determine resourcing levels required. A resourcing review will follow to match organisational need and will include a flexible working review. This review will include staffing within the CCA as well as the CCR as the two areas are intrinsically linked. This work will also include a long term recruitment strategy to ensure vacancies are filled in a timely way.

4.7 **Phase 5 – Review of culture and leadership within the CCR**

This will include clarification of line management responsibilities and will be critical to the long term success of this programme of work.

5.0 Conclusion

Significant work has been undertaken over the past months to ensure a long term and sustainable solution to the demands being placed on the CCR. It has been seen that despite a significant increase in call volume the CCR has maintained its ability to answer 999 calls in a timely way. The five-phase plan will ensure the sustainability of such a plan.