

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire Newsletter



February 2024

- PCC backs zombie knife ban as anti-knife crime campaign reaches 5,000 Bedfordshire students
- PCC advocates Neighbourhood Watch at local group's quarterly meeting
- Watch back the PCC's accountability meeting with the Chief Constable
- PCC backs efforts to tackle sexual violence during awareness week
- PCC confirms police precept increase
- PCC hosts second Annual Business Conference
- PCC backs national Victims' Code campaign
- PCC supports new officers in week of celebrations
- OPCC funds CESAR scheme to offer half price tracking equipment to farmers
- New webpage will support PCC candidates in their preparation for May election
- £1.4m anti-social behaviour investment announced by Beds PCC

PCC backs zombie knife ban as anti-knife crime campaign reaches 5,000 Bedfordshire students

Bedfordshire's Police and Crime Commissioner, Festus Akinbusoye, has backed new legislation that will see the sale of dangerous zombie-style knives banned, as a flagship anti-knife crime campaign for the county reached more than 5,000 students.

More than 5,000 students across 15 schools in Bedfordshire have received assemblies around the devastating impact of knife crime as part of the county's anti-knife crime campaign 'Just Drop It', which was endorsed by PCC Akinbusoye, the campaign was launched in November 2023 by sharing lived experience and the impact it has on lives.

This latest campaign success follows the PCC announcing his backing of new laws that seek to help stem the rise in knife crime by banning the sale of zombie knives.

[Read more about the anti-knife campaign on our website here.](#)



Bedfordshire Police

7 February at 19:01 ·

Drugs 🚫 Violence 🚫 Exploitation

Here's what a day at Bedfordshire Police looked like for our officers across our gangs and organised crime teams...

5 coordinated warrants

11 in custody

2 zombie knives seized

Hundreds of pounds worth of drugs

PCC advocates Neighbourhood Watch at local group's quarterly meeting

Bedfordshire Police community teams alongside Police and Crime Commissioner Festus Akinbusoye attended the Bedford Neighbourhood Watch quarterly meeting.

The PCC joined Councillor Colleen Atkins from Bedford Borough and local community policing teams at the event in Bedford.

Colleen Atkins, chair of Bedford & District Neighbourhood Watch, said: "I was pleased to welcome 70 Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators to the first Neighbourhood Watch Quarterly meeting of 2024. "I'd like to thank all the guest speakers who contributed so much to this successful event. We all benefitted from the advice and information from the excellent presentations. I look forward to our future meetings being as productive."

This is part of the commissioner's direct engagements with volunteers and the local community. The PCC said: "I will continue to support and advocate for local people and businesses who want to work with Bedfordshire Police in keeping our county safer.

"These meetings give the volunteers and the community policing teams the opportunity to spend time taking about local issues and concerns.

"As PCC, I am pleased to fund Bedford Neighbourhood Watch as I do other watch schemes across the county. My direct engagement with and accountability to local people continues".

Seventy members of Bedford Neighbourhood Watch and residents heard from the police about their vision for community policing in Bedford.

They updated residents on the recent already successful [operation to crackdown on retail crime](#). Residents also heard from the force about organised crime and scams and what to look out for.

For more information about Neighbourhood Watch and other volunteer schemes in Bedfordshire [visit the force's website](#).



Watch back the PCC's accountability meeting with the Chief Constable

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and Chief Constable held their accountability meeting as part of the PCC's statutory oversight and scrutiny of policing in Bedfordshire.

In the recorded meeting, available for public viewing, the PCC raised matters submitted by local residents.

Ahead of the meeting, the PCC received a record amount of questions from the public.

The questions related to different aspects of policing including car meets, victim support, officer retention and community policing.

The meeting also allows the PCC to be provided with updates on force activity.

[You can watch the PCC and Chief Constable accountability recording here.](#)



PCC backs efforts to tackle sexual violence during awareness week

In It's Not Ok week, the PCC continued to raise awareness around issues such as rape and sexual abuse.

The commissioner met with Bedfordshire Police's specialist victim engagement officers (VEOs), who provide dedicated support to victims of domestic abuse and sexual assault. The commissioner made funding available to recruit seven additional VEOs this year, doubling the size of the team.

Mr Akinbusoye's office has invested more than £1 million this year in support services to support victims and carry out prevention activity around domestic abuse and sexual violence.

The commissioner is also working with the PCC in Hertfordshire on the flagship [Chrysalis Centre](#), a £2 million project funded by the Home Office which aims to support and reform domestic abuse perpetrators.

[You can read more about the 'It's Not Ok' week here.](#)



PCC confirms police precept increase

Investments in tackling shoplifting, speeding and improving the force control room are in the pipeline after a rise in council tax to fund policing was approved in February.

The majority of respondents to a public survey backed increasing the police precept, with the move approved by the county's Police and Crime Panel on Tuesday (6 February).

The increase in council tax will fund a new dedicated senior officer focused on preventing knife crime and serious youth violence, as well as new technology to help identify shoplifters and make it easier for shopkeepers to report the crime to police.

Other areas of investment include putting more resources into Bedfordshire Police's control room, making better use of out of court disposals as well as better equipping the force's volunteer Special Constables to run operations to tackle speeding.

[You can read more on the confirmation of the police precept increase for 2024-25 here.](#)

PCC hosts second Annual Business Conference

Over 35 businesses attended the second annual business conference hosted by Bedfordshire's Police and Crime Commissioner.

So far this year in Bedfordshire, a crackdown on shoplifting in top locations has led to the solve rate of reported crimes tripling since January last year.

A targeted enforcement, officially known as Op Belleville was recently launched by Beds Police and backed by the Police and Crime Commissioner.

The PCC shared plans for a retail crime portal, which will allow retailers to submit evidence to accompany their reported crimes and track their progress digitally.

Being able to work closely with local businesses allows the police to gather as much intelligence as possible and continue to arrest offenders.

[Read more about the Annual Business Conference here.](#)



PCC backs national Victims' Code campaign

Police and Crime Commissioner Festus Akinbusoye has backed the new Ministry of Justice (MoJ) campaign.

The Victims Code is a practical guide that victims have the right to receive from police, courts and criminal justice agencies.

The campaign signposts victims of crime to new dedicated resources outlining support available to them.

Mr Akinbusoye said “As PCC, I have statutory responsibilities for ensuring support for victims of crime are in place and adequate.

“My office has funded a number of charities who support victims of crime. Services such as these are vital. They provide life-changing emotional and practical support for victims to help them cope and recover from the effects of the crimes.

“I am also the chair of the Criminal Justice Board. This meeting aims to improve communication and collaboration to provide fair, efficient, and effective criminal justice services in Bedfordshire. I will ensure the new victims code is high on our agenda.

“This, together with the support services alongside the new Victims' Code enables us to provide the best possible service to victims of crime and witnesses”.

More information on the new Victims Code can be found here: [Know your rights as a victim – Victim and Witness Information](#)



The Victims' Code



PCC supports new officers in week of celebrations

Dozens of officers, staff members and students have been recognised for outstanding achievements and reaching career milestones during a series of awards and graduation ceremonies in February.

The force's dedicated burglary team, a detective who led an investigation into a violent kidnapping, and various officers and staff involved in a major operation to bring down a suspected international criminal gang were all commended as part of a Long Service and Chief's Commendations ceremony held on Tuesday (13 February).

Six members of staff who began their policing careers more than 20 years ago were also recognised for their long-standing commitment to the force at the same event.

Meanwhile, 24 student officers officially graduated from their 22-week classroom-based training in front of proud family and friends, as well as the High Sheriff of Bedfordshire, at two passing out parades held throughout the week.

The students will now move into Bedfordshire Police's Student Hub, where they will take to the streets and put their training into practice under the guidance of experienced officers.

Seven new call handlers and radio agents have also joined the force this week, which should help the force continue its recent improvement in responding to 999 calls and other forms of public contact.

[Read more about the awards and graduation ceremonies on our website.](#)



OPCC funds CESAR scheme to offer half price tracking equipment to farmers

A major new project to help tackle rural crime by tracking stolen agricultural vehicles has been launched in Bedfordshire.

The CESAR scheme is the latest initiative funded by the county's Safer Streets project, which is focused on tackling neighbourhood crime issues such as anti-social behaviour and burglary.

A new half price discount will be available to Bedfordshire farmers on DataTags which have been known to assist policing teams to recover stolen agricultural equipment, like one excavator in Cheshire valued at almost £19,000.

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner has launched a new initiative worth £40,000, put aside in order to offer a half price discount to local farmers on CESAR security systems which are fitted to agricultural equipment and vehicles to deter against rural theft.

To order your half price CESAR system, please email enquiries@cesarscheme.org for a call back.



New webpage will support PCC candidates in their preparation for May election

The role and responsibilities of the Police and Crime Commissioner is among a wealth of information being hosted on a dedicated webpage which has been launched in the run-up to the upcoming election in May.

Bedfordshire's Office of Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) has [published the PCC elections page](#) to help prospective candidates who want to stand in the election and for members of the public to be informed of what is provided to prospective candidates.

The page contains details of the forthcoming election, key documents and information about the role of PCC, the work that the OPCC is responsible for and about Bedfordshire Police. If prospective candidates ask questions or submit freedom of information requests, the responses will also be published on the web page. A briefing event for candidates will be held on 12 March to give further information and details of the role. For those people who want to attend the briefing, please contact BedsPCCelectionsInbox@beds.police.uk for further information.

£1.4m anti-social behaviour investment announced by Beds PCC

Every police force in England and Wales will receive at least £1 million from the government to ramp up patrols to tackle violence and disorder, targeted in areas with high levels of anti-social behaviour.

It is estimated that the funding, hitting £66 million for England and Wales, will enable each force to deploy more uniformed patrols in “hotspot” areas, helping drive down crime and boost public confidence in their local force.

Police and Crime Commissioner Festus Akinbusoye said “In Bedfordshire we are tackling anti-social behaviour in both rural and urban areas, with issues being reported by our residents ranging from nuisance motorbikes and vehicles, to fly tipping. The anti-social behaviour hotspot pilots carried out by other constabularies have demonstrated what can be achieved by concentrating efforts on problem areas and following a zero-tolerance approach to drug taking, loitering and fly-tipping.

“When meeting with Bedfordshire’s communities, I hear about how the public want the tackling of anti-social behaviour to be prioritised. Bedfordshire Police’s local community policing teams work tirelessly to reassure residents and to help them feel safe, so it is great to see that the government recognises this and is willing to offer further support of our community policing operations.”

“I welcome the funding for this initiative, and I will continue to work directly with the public to ensure that the areas and activities targeted are both effective and visible.”

The £66m of funding will be targeted in areas where there is high prevalence of violence, anti-social behaviour, and illegal public drug consumption, which not only makes communities feel less safe but can fuel drug related violence.

DID YOU KNOW?

Antisocial behaviour takes many forms, from aggressive, noisy or abusive behaviour to neighbourhood disturbances involving drugs or animals.

If you’ve witnessed antisocial behaviour, please report it to Bedfordshire Police via [101](tel:101) or by [reporting online](#).

Your neighbourhood can be an area where you live, work, or visit often.

**ANTI-SOCIAL
BEHAVIOUR**



Take a read of what our office has been up to throughout February!



The PCC attended a community celebration event at Potton Town Council alongside the Community Policing team.



Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, Ian Dalgarno visited the launch of a 'Young Riders Course' which is a joint initiative between Beds, Cambs and Herts to educate young people between of 16-19 years old who ride motorcycles, about the importance of safety.



The Office hosted the semi-finals of the schools debate competition at Bedford Magistrates Court.



The PCC visited Dan Gaze Support Services to see the impact a commissioned service is having on young people in Flitwick.

Dan Gaze Support Services was commissioned to deliver a music and mentoring intervention in Flitwick recently.



The PCC visited Robert Bloomfield Academy, Barnfield College and Van Dyke Upper School as part of his commitment to visit all schools in Bedfordshire.



The PCC joined the Bedfordshire Police Personal Safety Training (PST) Instructor, PC Cunnington in taking the 2nd Ampthill Guides through their paces at force HQ.

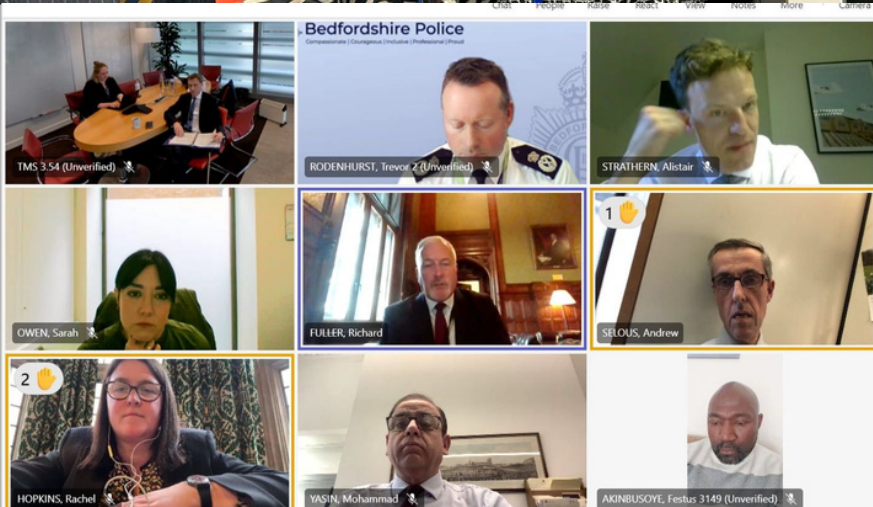


The PCC paid a visit to Bedfordshire Police Force Control Room on a Friday night. He stated it was good to see the growing staff numbers in there compared to two years ago and that call handling times have improved significantly in last 12 months too.

Follow [@BedsOPCC](#) to find out more on what activities the PCC and his office are doing day-to-day!



| Group | Available | Unavailable | Calls Waiting | Wait Time |
|-------|-----------|-------------|---------------|-----------|
| 999 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 00:00 |
| 101 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 00:00 |
| P101 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 00:00 |
| CRB | | RVR | | |
| 999's | | 95% | | |



You can keep up to date with the PCC and his offices day to day work via X, Facebook and Instagram



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