

Many thanks for your letter to the Police and Crime Commission on behalf of the Town Council. As the Superintendent of Community Policing within Bedfordshire Police, I have been asked to provide a response to the requests that you have made.

You have sought an immediate strengthened police presence in Leighton Buzzard in order to respond to and prevent crime and anti-social behaviour. You will be aware of the ongoing recruitment of police officers into Bedfordshire Police. This is of course positive for the county and will in time (following training) result in more police officers on our streets. In the meantime, you will be aware of the newly opened hub at Bossard House. This base improves our ability to maintain a patrol function in the town, providing a visible presence and responding to emergency incidents. I hope you will begin to see the impact of this immediately.

You also seek an increase in unformed Community police officers, up to the level of 10. I can confirm that this level remains unchanged, although we currently have 2 vacancies. We are in the midst of a recruitment process to attract new officers into the team to bring us back up to the establishment level. We have a minimum tenure policy in place requiring our Community police officers to remain in post for at least 2 years. I recognise the value of local officers with local knowledge and well-established relationships with communities and partners, and I continue to strive to maintain stability within the team. That being said, there will always be a steady flow of change as officers move due to a range of reasons such as promotion, career diversification and retirement. These are factors that impact on Community Policing across the county and are not unique to Leighton Buzzard.

Your last point is with reference to the pursuance of a strategy of public accountability for juvenile offenders. I will take this opportunity to reassure you that we do not tolerate crime and ASB committed by anyone, including juvenile offenders. By way of illustration, Operation Pentagon was created in response to the awful series of criminal damage, ASB, hate crime and threatening behaviour offences in July. We took a firm approach and following investigations, we arrested 8 young people, interviewed an additional 7 young people, we carried out multiple house searches and made 13 referrals to Youth Offending Service for additional intervention work. These matters have not yet concluded through the criminal justice process but I hope this provides reassurance regarding our approach to dealing with crime and ASB committed by young people.

In addition to our Community and Patrol teams, we have an Education and Diversion Team which operates within the town. One part of this teams' responsibility is to identify young people committing crime and ASB, and / or at risk of being criminally exploited, and to work with partners to prevent offending. Where possible we will seek early intervention to prevent an escalation of criminal behaviour. Our focus should always be one of prevention first but where crime has been committed, we will deal with it accordingly.

I do hope this adequately addresses the points you have raised.

Kind regards

Superintendent  
Community Policing

*Address: Bedfordshire Police HQ, Woburn Road, Kempston, MK43 9AX*  
*Website: [www.bedfordshire.police.uk](http://www.bedfordshire.police.uk)*

Dear Mark,

Thank you for your email.

Accept my apologies for not responding sooner.

I genuinely share the concerns of your residents and Council members as expressed in the letter. Your MP and I are in regular communication on these issues. No doubt, this will continue.

You will know that the deployment of police resources is an operational police matter which is the prerogative of the Chief Constable, not the Commissioner as per your request.

I will however remind you that, Leighton Buzzard currently has the highest number of community officers in Central Bedfordshire, though I can't say it has the highest reported crime levels in the area (based on the last time I checked). Furthermore, the issues reported are also not for policing alone to address which is why, for example, I co-commissioned activities for the most vulnerable young people in CBC and LB over the six week summer holiday. You may also be aware of over £6000 funding provided by my office for Groundwork to deliver programmes in Leighton Buzzard.

This is the sort of long term, partnership work needed to tackle the important issues raised in your letter.

In addition to the above, a Community Police Hub (not a police station or enquiries office) will be opening in Leighton Buzzard shortly. Details of this will be sent to you in due course.

Lastly, I am somewhat confused at the Council's demand for "proper public accountability for juvenile offenders". I cannot say I know what is meant by this. Nonetheless, the process of dealing with offenders is established in legislation as set out by Parliament. As Commissioner, I do not have the powers to mete out judgement or sentencing to offenders (young or old). Police officers however, are able to use out of court disposals in accordance with guidelines and where applicable. Do forgive me if I have misunderstood this part of your letter.

Be reassured of my continued commitment to visible, proactive and community based policing in Leighton Buzzard. Naturally, I want the force to be able to do more, however, I am also acutely aware of the policing demands across the county and stretched resource levels. I value the dedication of the officers who work in the force and the leadership of executive team as well. Thank you for acknowledging the work of these officers in your letter.

I sincerely appreciate your continued engagement on this important issue of policing your vibrant and growing town.

Regards,

**Festus Akinbusoye**

Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire



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