



WILTSHIRE POLICE

Police and Crime Commissioner
Philip Wilkinson.

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Dear Police and Crime Commissioner Philip Wilkinson,

Over the last couple of weeks we have had some excellent operational successes I wish to share with you, which will have contributed to my mission of Keeping Wiltshire Safe.

- Two people were sentenced to more than five years for modern slavery and human trafficking offences after bringing female victims to Swindon and exploiting them to work in brothels. This is further to an investigation which commenced in 2018 with our Serious and Organised Crime Unit (SOCU) working alongside partners and the National Crime Agency, which focused on an organised crime group (OCG) trafficking young women from Romania to the UK to work as sex workers, with the proceeds of the crime then laundered. This justice outcome is a fantastic piece of work across multiple Crime and Justice partners who have collectively disrupted an exploitative gang, removed them from our streets and protected vulnerable people.
- The Regional Organised Crime Unit have also seen an excellent result recently in relation to another investigation involving an organised crime group (OCG), with a sentence of 37 and a half years in total for four men, one of whom is from Swindon. These men acted as drugs and money couriers, enabling £3million worth of cocaine to be supplied to the South West, including in Swindon. This follows on from eight other members of the same OCG having previously been sentenced to 87 years – meaning the total custodial sentences handed down to these offenders amounts to 124 years. This gang have clearly caused massive harm in our communities and this justice outcome I hope emphasises our position on this type of crime and makes our message clear – the Southwest is no place for drugs.
- A man was sentenced to four months in custody, 60 days of rehabilitation and ordered to pay a £154 victim surcharge (which is a penalty applied to people convicted of offences to provide compensation for the victims of crime) after pleading guilty to sexual assault following two incidents in Pewsey at the end of 2023. This was an incident that was understandably terrifying for the victim, and the outcome I hope helps reassure people that violence against women and girls is a top priority for the Force. Last week was 'It's Not Ok' week – a national week to raise awareness of sexual abuse and sexual violence which was supported by Wiltshire Police. During the week, we explained the different ways to report an incident, what someone can expect during the process, and described the support that would be provided. I would like to use this letter as an opportunity to reinforce a really important message to our communities – if you have been a

Keeping Wiltshire Safe

victim of sexual assault, please come forward and tell us – you will be listened to and you will be treated with compassion and understanding, with the support of specially trained officers.

- A man has been convicted with sending, by a public communications network, an offensive/indecent/obscene or menacing message or matter. This was in relation to a case where this man took a video of himself having consensual sex with the victim, a woman in her 20s, without her knowledge, which he then shared across social media. This is a disgraceful and shocking crime which has, undoubtedly, had a long lasting and significant impact on the victim who has bravely reported this. He will be sentenced in early March.

- Last week, a man was arrested and charged with possession of a firearm further to a firearm being located in Toothill, Swindon and he will next appear in court 8 March. Well done to all my teams who were involved in the arresting of this offender, which has meant we have removed a lethal weapon from our streets.

- A man who had a Criminal Behaviour Order in place following release from prison on license has been put back in prison further to breaching the order, and given an additional 12-month custodial sentence as a result of the breach. This is an example where positive action has been taken to prevent a prolific shoplifter re-offending.

I know that shoplifting is a significant blight on our retail communities and can cause real misery, not to mention significant financial impact. In the year 2022 – 2023, we saw 4,056 shoplifting offences reported across our county – an increase of 39% from the previous year, many of which are taking place within our town centres. For the 12 months ending January 2024, we have seen positive outcomes for 25.7% of crimes in this area (an increase from 23.6% the previous year) and in the same period our volume of arrests for theft from a shop offences have increased by 25.6% (meaning we have arrested an additional 100 suspects).

Whilst we already regularly work with our business communities, next month is Business Crime Awareness Month and my teams, including the Neighbourhood Policing Teams and our Neighbourhood Harm Reduction Unit, will be actively engaging with our Town Centre partnership in Swindon as well as Salisbury Business Improvement District (BID), to ensure we tighten our approach to business crime, providing crime prevention advice and support, delivering robust activity and exploring sustainable problem solving. We know there is more we need to do, in partnership, to tackle this really damaging crime.

- On the subject of high impact crime, two 16-year-old boys have recently been sentenced, following a break in at a home in Devizes where they took the keys to the homeowner's vehicle, stole the vehicle and drove it dangerously. Both boys were given a Youth Referral Order for two years, an electronic tag for six months and a curfew for six months, with one also being subject to a two-year supervision order in addition, due to the level of offending. We know that residential burglary of a home or an unconnected building has seen a decrease of around 15% over the last year, alongside Wiltshire having the lowest number of home burglaries per 1,000 population compared to our similar forces. However, we are absolutely not complacent. The impact of burglary cannot be underestimated - it is an abhorrent and invasive crime which has long lasting impacts on its victims. As I have mentioned in a previous letter to you, I have introduced a dedicated Burglary Team to really focus on burglary trends and we are starting to see increases in our positive outcome rate for burglaries within the home, which stands at 8.3% on average over the last ten months, but rose to 14% for the month of January alone. With clear focus and the work of the dedicated team, I know we will increase this further.

I hope all the above reassures our communities that we are absolutely focused on arresting and charging those who cause misery and harm on our streets, and that we are taking positive action to robustly bring offenders to justice. In the 12 months to December 2023, positive outcomes have occurred in 14.8% of incidents reported, an increase of 2.5% points from the previous year. We are striving to improve this further, with the best performing forces seeing a rate of around 17%. We will ensure we do all we can, working with the Crown Prosecution Service, to bring about justice for victims.

This week, I was personally delighted to feature on Chippenham Hospital Radio with Sgt Jamie Ball. This is part of a regular programme of monthly radio appearances Sgt Ball does on the show to answer questions about local policing and, on Monday, I was privileged to be invited along to take part in the Q&A. This is yet another example of the fantastic work our Neighbourhood Policing Team officers and staff do, day in, day out, to engage with all our diverse communities across the county.

I, alongside other Wiltshire Police representatives, have also been honoured over the last couple of weeks to have had the pleasure of welcoming two members of our Royal Family when they have visited our wonderful county.

Firstly, we had the honour of welcoming HRH The Princess Royal to the county where she firstly visited the brilliant Dressability charity in Swindon, a charity that amends and alters clothing for people with disabilities, limited dexterity or who have suffered strokes, followed by a visit to St John's Ambulance in Devizes to celebrate the launch of a new Wiltshire Community Response Unit in the presence of donors and volunteers. I was also delighted to be part of the civic line up for HM Queen Camilla as she attended a concert at Salisbury Cathedral in support of several Wiltshire based charities for whom she is Patron, including the Wiltshire Bobby Van Trust, Community First and the Wiltshire Air Ambulance, together with the Grenadier and Rifles Regimental Charities. The concert, also attended by yourself and Chief of Corporate Services for the Force, John Derryman, was a truly incredible evening and testament to all who worked so hard to create such a memorable event.

These Royal visits to Wiltshire are so special and really do pay huge tribute to the work of all those involved in community safety across our county and enables such meaningful engagement with our communities.

Kindest regards,



Catherine Roper
Chief Constable, Wiltshire Police