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Dear Parish/District/County Councillor/MP's/NHW Co-ordinators/Sue Mountstevens,

As Christmas approaches and I write my last newsletter of 2012, you will no doubt be aware of recent significant changes with the announcement that our Chief Constable will be standing down, and the appointment of a new Police and Crime Commissioner. I think it is also an opportune time to give updates on the substantial progress made over the whole of the Somerset East district.

Firstly, I should like to say I have very much enjoyed working with our Chief Constable, Colin Port, for the past 8 years and thank him for all his valuable support. I wish him well for the future as he stands down as Chief Constable of Avon and Somerset from January 2013 and can inform you that there is an ongoing process to appoint a new Chief Constable.

We have also recently seen the appointment of the new Police and Crime Commissioner, Mrs Sue Mountstevens, and I look forward to working with her over the coming months and years in continuing to make our communities safe. I have already had the opportunity to meet with her and discuss in brief the 4 specific areas she would like the Force to focus on as a result of her consultation with local communities. These areas are:

1. Tackling anti social behaviour
2. Tackling violence, particularly violence towards women and girls
3. Preventing and reducing crime, specifically burglary
4. Putting victims at the heart of the criminal justice system.

We will be working closely to draw up a plan local to Somerset East District to tackle the crime and community safety issues which most affect our communities. Mrs Mountstevens is keen to consult widely on this plan and there will be several opportunities early in the New Year for you to contribute. Details of these events will be advertised on the Force website. The plan will be finalised and published in April of next year.

Moving on now to progress made during the last few weeks, November saw two very successful Relentless operations, resulting in 100 additional arrests for a variety of crimes, including burglary and vehicle crime. We were supported by many of our partners during this period, including those from local authority and housing

organisations. Everyone worked seamlessly together to make the two days a fantastic success, and in addition to partners, large numbers of staff from Police HQ administrative posts came to work on the District to support us and boost numbers. We also had a six week period of concerted effort around serious acquisitive crime such as burglary and vehicle crime and we were able to secure the support of specialist resources from Police HQ, as a result of which a number of arrests were made.

Serious acquisitive crime which includes dwelling burglary, theft of and from motor vehicles and robbery has reduced by 6% over this time last year resulting in significantly less victims of these upsetting and disturbing crimes. Importantly, we have had some real success in bringing offenders to justice for stealing motor vehicles and are currently detecting just under 30% of all motor thefts.

As always one of my key priorities is to ensure my officers and staff delivers a professional and effective service to anyone who needs our help and particularly to victims of crime. I measure the quality of our service by asking victims to rate the police service they receive. This month I am delighted to report that our performance has again improved in this area. Staff have far exceeded their targets for keeping victims updated and 83% of victims report they are happy with the updates provided – specifically in respect of burglary, particularly, 90% are happy with the updates they have received.

Successes have been achieved in relation to violence against the person which has reduced by 7.7% compared to this time last year with more serious offences of grievous bodily harm and actual bodily harm reducing more than 10%.

Anti social behaviour can affect any neighbourhood and can be extremely upsetting and disruptive for not only the victim but also the wider community. My staff have been focusing on trying to reduce anti social behaviour and to work with partner organisations and communities to resolve the issues on a long term basis. The Force has introduced a Gold Standard for tackling anti social behaviour to ensure we identify vulnerable and repeat victims to give them the service they need and deserve, and I am delighted to report that 84% of people reporting anti social behaviour are happy with the service they received.

Often associated with anti social behaviour is the crime of criminal damage. My officers and staff have been focusing on reducing this specific type of crime and I am happy to report that this crime type has reduced by more than 18% compared to last year.

I always like to take the opportunity in these letters of giving information or reporting on the good work which has taken place on the District, and the following six examples give a flavour of some excellent local policing.

The first of these relates to an event a couple of months ago, when police were called to a serious fire at a block of flats in Chard. Upon arrival it was clear that the fire presented a life threatening situation to the residents. A female resident was trapped in an upstairs flat, the fire service had not yet arrived, and so one of my female officers climbed a ladder through the smoke and flames, entered the flat through an

open window into the trapped resident's flat and tried to encourage the lady to climb onto the window sill. The resident was unable to negotiate the window sill, but after some quick thinking by the officer who threw a stereo speaker through the window to smash it, she was able to help the resident out to safety down the ladder, assisted by the fire brigade who had just arrived on the scene. This Officer went beyond the call of duty putting herself at risk of serious harm to save the female resident from immediate danger.

In September 2012, two Yeovil officers were called to the scene of a possible domestic incident. Upon arrival, they were confronted by a violent male who threatened them and then took refuge in a vehicle on private land. The male was in breach of a non molestation order and was not permitted to be on the property. After brief negotiations failed the male threatened the officers by suggesting he was going to blow up the vehicle he was in and as the officers tried to take action to prevent the male from injuring himself and others, he attempted to ignite a gas bottle concealed inside. The officers' quick thinking and positive action prevented serious injury or death and although the suspect did manage to partially ignite the gas bottle, causing some minor injuries to both officers and gas inhalation to himself, he was arrested for attempted murder and charged with arson with intent to endanger the life of both officers. The male is currently remanded in custody awaiting trial.

In October, officers attended a house fire in Yeovil caused by an electrical fault which led to the discovery of several hundred cannabis plants found growing. Further enquiries linked this address to another in Hazelbury Plucknett which was searched a few months earlier and found to have hundreds of plants also. Enquiries also identified yet another address in Yeovil found to contain a cannabis factory and resulted in two Vietnamese nationals being arrested. The landlord of the Yeovil properties has also been arrested.

Continuing our fight against rural crime, in October 2012, three offenders were arrested at Lottisham for theft/handling after quantities of power cable were found at the scene and firearms were seized from the address following the discovery of an unlicensed shotgun.

In the Mendip area, a male was seen acting suspiciously in Bolters Lane, Shepton Mallet. Due to the high number of rural thefts in the area officers self deployed to the area and stopped the offender and searched him. Following enquiries at the location the male was arrested on suspicion of fuel theft after discovery of major damage and siphoning from the domestic fuel tank at premises he was arrested outside. The male was charged with stealing heating oil.

Finally, and most recently, following a series of thefts from motor vehicles overnight on 26/27 November in Frome, a known local offender was arrested on 30 November. On being interviewed he admitted all twenty three offences and has been recalled to prison to appear in court later this month.

In addition to our relentless fight against crime, it will not have escaped your notice that our area has been subject to huge amounts of rainfall over recent weeks and there have been several occasions where a number of communities, villages and roads have experienced severe flooding. My staff have worked tirelessly with the Fire Service

and Local Authorities to ensure the safety of residents, assisting them in reaching their properties and on some occasions helping residents being evacuated to safety for a number of hours whilst flood water subsided.

Areas which we will be focusing on in the New Year include continuing to reduce serious and acquisitive crime, dealing with anti social behaviour, reducing re-offending, tackling all aspects of rural crime such as non dwelling burglary, theft of agricultural equipment, and metal theft. In addition, we will be looking to support residents of farms and isolated properties. We will also continue to work with other organisations to abate the negative effects of drugs and alcohol issues.

Work also continues on an initiative with partners in both South Somerset and Mendip to tackle the issues experienced by some families. All the organisations are working together to co-ordinate our support for these families, reduce duplication and hopefully improve the outcomes for the families involved. This initiative is called the Troubled Families initiative (locally named Family Support initiative) and is fronted nationally by Louise Casey in the Home Office. I will keep you updated as the work progresses but I think it is an exciting opportunity to make a real difference to the lives of those families involved.

Now for an update on some recent changes in my Senior Leadership Team. Richard Corrigan has been temporarily promoted to Superintendent of the District. Chief Inspector Sean Williams moves to cover the Mendip part of the District and Chief Inspector Ray Hulin joins us to cover the South Somerset area of the District. Detective Chief Inspector Pete Warren continues to lead our CID resources.

Thank you for reading this newsletter, which is intended to regularly keep you up to date with what is happening in Somerset East District. If you have any feedback for me, my contact details are: nikki.watson@avonandsomerset.police.uk.

Finally, on a more personal but seasonal note, I should like to ask for your assistance in spreading the message to Somerset East District local communities of the importance in keeping their property secure during the lead up to Christmas. Please ensure Christmas presents and other attractive items are not left on view in vehicles and also ensure homes are secure to avoid opportunist thefts. Overall, Somerset East District has achieved the largest reduction in crime in the Force and there are currently 1,632 fewer victims than this time last year – a trend I intend to continue!

May I take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy and safe Christmas and New Year.

Yours sincerely

Nikki Watson
Chief Superintendent