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20 May 2020

Dear Councillor

As the Divisional Commander responsible for policing in your area, I wanted to take this opportunity to provide you with a brief overview of what you can expect from your local police during the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the policing role with regards to the current Government restrictions.

I would firstly like to reassure you that despite the current situation, day to day policing responsibilities continue. We continue to provide a timely response to incidents that require police attendance, prioritising those incidents where there is a risk of harm to individuals or the wider public. Sadly, despite these difficult times, crimes are still being committed, so we continue to investigate offences, support victims and bring offenders to justice. Most importantly, we continue in our efforts to protect the most vulnerable in our communities, be they victims of domestic abuse; those in mental health crisis or reported missing from home. Whilst the state of policing in Derbyshire cannot be described as normal, good planning, ongoing coordination with partner agencies and the hard work of all of our officers and police staff, has allowed us to remain as close as possible to business as usual policing.

The Covid-19 situation however, has inevitably presented a number of challenges. Many people are understandably concerned, be it for their own health, the health of their loved ones, or their livelihoods and as they did before, in times of need people turn to the police for help and guidance and we have experienced a significant increase in demand regards Covid-19 related incidents. Indeed, the recent Bank Holiday weekend saw incident demand akin to that of a typical New Year's Eve. The current Government guidance is extensive and sets out the relevant advice for the public across a number of given scenarios, be it work, health or education. However, the role of the police is confined only to breaches of those restrictions as set out within the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions (England) Regulations - amended 13th May 2020. I have attached a briefing document which helpfully summarises the restrictions and the police role. It is a publicly available document, also available via the below link and I would be happy for you to share it as you feel appropriate.

<https://www.college.police.uk/What-we-do/COVID-19/understanding-the-law/Documents/Health-Protection-Regulations-Amendments-England-changes-130520.pdf>

The easing of the restrictions and amendment to the regulations has led to an increase in people gathering in public spaces and visiting Derbyshire's many parks and beauty spots. I very much understand the concerns that this has caused to those who live or work in those areas. Your local police, supported by Special Constable volunteers and some of our partner agencies will continue to patrol those areas which are seeing high numbers of people in open spaces. The focus of our response to the crisis remains upon keeping people safe, protecting the NHS and saving lives. Accordingly, our approach will continue to be to engage, explain, encourage and if necessary, enforce, but only where there has been a breach of the current regulations. The vast majority of the public are following the wider Government guidance, however, where they don't, such as failing to exercise safe social distancing, then in those cases, the police do not have any powers of enforcement. It is only those actions that are contrary to the aforementioned regulations that fall within policing responsibilities.

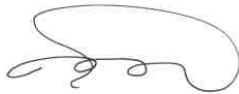
North Division, Beetwell Street, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S40 1QP

I am also aware that the easing of restrictions has resulted in increased traffic on our roads. Again in the main, the people who use our roads do so responsibly, in accordance with local road conditions and the law. Local officers supported by colleagues from the Roads Policing Unit and the Casualty Reduction Enforcement Safety Team (CREST) continue in the effort to keep our roads safe. Patrols and enforcement activity will continue to be targeted at accident hot spots and areas where speeding is evident and I would encourage you to continue to report any local concerns.

Finally, it is important for you to know that your local Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) continue to work to help keep local communities safe. You can find details of the officers who make up your local SNT via the Derbyshire Constabulary website, where you can also find information relating to local policing activity and crime issues. On the same page there is also the 'contact your local team' online contact tool where you can raise issues affecting your local area. Additionally, if you use social media, I would encourage you to follow your local SNT via Twitter or Facebook so you can see some of the fantastic work they are doing in your area. Given the speed at which the situation is changing, we are also making good use of our main website, force Twitter and Facebook accounts to share key messages and updates relating to Covid-19 and wider policing activity. Again, I would encourage you to visit these mediums in order to keep up to date with any new developments as they arise.

As we head towards what will undoubtedly be another busy weekend, I hope that this letter reassures you that we continue to do our utmost to keep Derbyshire safe for all who live, work and visit here, but I realise that we are not alone in this effort. I am hugely grateful for you and your colleagues continued support to your local police teams, our other emergency services and for the work that you do in these difficult times in keeping our communities safe.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hayley Barnett', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Hayley Barnett
Divisional Commander
North Division