

<b>Committee:</b> Economic and Cyber Crime Committee – For information	<b>Dated:</b> 14/02/2022
<b>Subject:</b> National Lead Force Update	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	1,10, 12
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>If so, how much?</b>	<b>NA</b>
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	<b>NA</b>
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?</b>	<b>NA</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Assistant Commissioner Pete O’Doherty	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Adam Maskell	

## **SUMMARY**

This report provides information on key activities delivered as part of the National Lead Force Plan. These activities include:

- Improvements to Action Fraud reporting
- National protect campaigns to tackle online shopping and romance fraud
- Continued coordination of Project Otello activity
- Multiple arrests for courier fraud
- Force and PCC engagement

### **Recommendation(s)**

It is recommended that members note the contents of this report.

## **MAIN REPORT**

### **BACKGROUND**

1. The National Lead Force Plan was approved by Police Authority Board in October 2020. The plan is structured around 5 key outcomes / aims with milestones and performance measures attributed to each milestone. This report will be a standing agenda item in future and will provide an overview of ongoing activity.

### **CURRENT POSITION**

#### **Outcome 1: The public has confidence in the Action Fraud reporting service**

***Action Fraud is the National Fraud and Cybercrime Reporting Service delivered by COLP. Responsibilities include providing a first point of contact for victims of fraud, crime reporting and triage. We constantly seek opportunities to improve the quality of service delivered informed by user feedback. A number of activities are in progress including changes to staffing and recruitment models and technological improvements.***

#### Next Generation Fraud and Cyber Reporting and Analysis Service

1. The procurement process to appoint a supply chain to develop the new service continues. The Invitation to Participate in Negotiation process commenced on 21 December 2021 with 13 bidders across 3 service lots requested to submit their first service solution bids by 28 February 2022. The procurement and negotiation procedure will conclude in quarter 3, with award recommendations going to governance forums early in 2023.
2. On 31 March 2022, the new and improved online reporting tool and website will be available for private beta with go live scheduled for Quarter 2 2022/23. This is an early deliverable of the Next Generation programme and will bring the following key benefits:
  - a. Improved victim experience and satisfaction
  - b. More successful criminal justice outcomes, harm prevention & improved understanding of the threat
  - c. Better accuracy of information
  - d. Improved analysis of victimology and vulnerability

#### Enhanced cyber reporting service to increase reporting confidence by businesses

3. A new service is currently being designed to help businesses report cyber crime. Businesses are less likely to report cyber crime offences than individuals and this is, in part, due to a lack of knowledge and confidence in the national fraud and cyber reporting process. To ensure more crimes are reported, and to increase businesses confidence in reporting, NFIB is designing and implementing an Enhanced Business Cyber Reporting Service.
4. The service will be established as a proof-of-concept and if successful, will be incorporated as part of the Next Generation service. The project will consist of:
  - a. A bespoke call centre with handlers that have extra training to provide immediate remedial action, mitigation advice and ensure all reports are recorded in accordance with crime reporting standards
  - b. Specialist crime reviewers who will assess each report and establish an agreed plan to either distribute the allegation to the most appropriate law enforcement agency or provide an enhanced level of protect messaging and signposting to reduce the impact of the offence
  - c. A strategic data sharing protocols portal which will streamline and increase efficiencies for sharing data

### ChatBot function deployed into full service

5. Following extensive testing during 2021, the new chatbot function was successfully deployed in a fully live environment in December 2021. The chatbot is a computer program that simulates and processes human conversation (on line) allowing humans to interact with digital devices as if they were communicating with a real person. This is the first of its kind in policing. Victims using this service are not talking to a human on the end of the chatbot, and are advised of this. The programme has built in artificial intelligence, so will learn as time progresses, continuously enhancing the service. It is estimated that the chatbot reduces demand equivalent to 4 call handlers taking routine calls, enabling more vulnerable victims to access the service and speak to an advisor.

### **Outcome 2: People and organisations are prevented from being victims of fraud, and victims are supported (Protect)**

#### Online shopping campaign launched in lead up to Black Friday / Cyber Monday

6. COLP led its annual online shopping protect campaign (created in partnership with the NCSC) in November 2021. During a week of focused activity the network reached **10.2 million** individuals, with **32 million** impressions. During the full festive period (22 Nov – 4 Jan) the campaign reached **12.2 million** individuals, achieving **47 million** impressions. The campaign also achieved significant media coverage and reached offline communities through the neighbourhood alert system and the multiple community groups attached to this.

#### Launch of new Romance Fraud campaign in January 2022

7. City of London Police launched a romance fraud campaign in January 2022. The overarching objectives of the campaign are to raise the profile of romance fraud at a time when data shows first contact between victim and offender takes place, and to see an increase of reporting of romance fraud due to raising the profile of this fraud type. The messaging also helps people to identify if their friends or family may be victims of romance fraud and encourages intervention. Communications materials, including a press release, regional statistics, suggested social media posts and social media assets, were distributed to all force communications teams before Christmas.

### **Outcome 3: Police resources are coordinated and deployed efficiently and effectively (Pursue / Protect / Prepare)**

***City of London Police is responsible for developing and disseminating crime reports for intelligence, protect and pursue action to policing and other law enforcement through the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau. It is also responsible for leading and coordinating the police response to fraud. Its current focus includes increasing judicial outcomes and the effectiveness of operational activity undertaken by policing through leadership and coordination of activity against high harm crimes.***

## Project Otello

8. City of London Police has agreed tactical and operational plans for the sustained improvement to the policing response towards Courier Fraud and Romance Fraud under Project Otello. The aims of the extended work programme are to:
  - a. impact positively on levels of organised criminal activity and bring offenders to justice;
  - b. provide disruption opportunities where investigation is not viable;
  - c. identify and support victims at the earliest possible stage, even where reporting has not taken place; and
  - d. increase levels of intelligence to facilitate better proactive opportunities.
9. The targeting of high harm frauds, particularly those identified within the NFIB Control Strategy, continues to be a priority. Recent campaign work around courier fraud and romance fraud had new breakthroughs with access to large amounts of intelligence, which provides for exciting proactive opportunities.
10. Forces across the country have implemented local plans for the occurrences of courier fraud, with a number of them working in collaboration with the Lead Force Operations Room (LFOR) to target the organised aspect of the criminality involved.
11. Learning from past campaigns, the work combatting romance fraud brings new opportunities in respect of disruption, and the realisation that there are some outstanding opportunities to identify and deliver interventions in cases where victims are not aware of what is happening. Our relationships with a number of international law enforcement agencies continues to develop, and with it provides a realistic route of prosecution outside the confines of our own jurisdiction.

## Lead Force Operations Room supports international pursue activity

12. LFOR were notified that German authorities required assistance with an investigation into a far reaching boiler room investment fraud for non-existent bonds, shares and other financial investments, resulting in total losses of at least €30 million. LFOR conducted intelligence checks ascertaining that four persons of interest had a UK base and proceeded to secure warrants to obtain evidence on behalf of German authorities. The warrants were executed simultaneously by officers from City of London Police, the National Crime Agency, North Wales Police and Sussex Police, whose invaluable support enabled the operation to be a success. During the warrants, material was seized and will be transmitted back to the German investigators to continue their investigation. The investigation was further supported by suspect interviews completed on behalf of the German investigators.

## Bilateral data sharing with Microsoft

13. Following a long period of collaboration between COLP and Microsoft, a new MOA has been signed which agrees a process for bilateral data sharing. This is

based on a robust mechanism of checks and balances to ensure victim's privacy whilst allowing us to share threat data to effectively pursue global investigations with a view to increase identification and pursuit of offenders.

#### **Outcome 4: Fraudsters operating nationally are identified and their offending is being disrupted (Pursue)**

***City of London Police investigates nationally significant, serious and complex fraud on behalf of policing. It received referrals from a range of stakeholders including police forces, ROCUs, National Fraud Intelligence Bureau and the National Economic Crime Centre, as well as stakeholders linked to its funded units.***

##### More arrests for courier fraud

14. An investigation into courier fraud with estimated losses of around £1m across 40 victims, many of them vulnerable, has resulted in two people working in public healthcare services being arrested for supplying an organised crime group with personal data of victims.
15. The Lead Force Operations Room assisted North Yorkshire Police arrest a member of an organised crime group which persuaded two elderly sisters to buy gold bars worth almost £500,000. The suspect, who has a history of violence towards police officers, surrendered after the warrant was executed early in the morning and his home was searched by officers. COLP's digital dog, Fred, along with his handler, located SIM cards hidden at his address. Officers from LFOR then assisted with a search of further addresses. The suspect was interviewed before being charged and remanded in custody.

##### Wanted suspect arrested and charged

16. Proactive activity by COLP identified an outstanding suspect in a £4m investment fraud and £78k recovery room fraud had returned to the UK having been wanted for 3 years. The suspect managed to re-enter the UK undetected and had been staying with family. The suspect was arrested as he was about to leave the country and has been charged and remanded in custody.

#### **Outcome 5: Policing has the capability and capacity to detect, disrupt and deter economic crime (Prepare)**

***City of London Police is a centre of expertise for fraud and is responsible for identifying, developing and disseminating good practice. It provides economic crime investigation training to policing, government and the private sector through its Economic Crime Academy. It is working with policing to build fraud capabilities and reform the fraud operating model.***

##### National fraud response

17. In September 2021, a joint NECC/CoLP paper was presented at National Strategic Tasking and Coordination Group (NSTCG) concerning how law enforcement understands and improves the pursue response to the demand for

fraud. Five recommendations were approved and link to improving the judicial outcomes to fraud demand, the response to NCA fraud intelligence disseminations and the refusal rate for fraud related DAMLs. COLP has written to chief constables requesting their support to drive forward these recommendations alongside the ambition to continue to upskill policing to tackle economic crime, embedding force fraud performance and improvement to the victim experience to increase satisfaction. The NSTG requirements were also highlighted at the annual Serious and Organised Crime conference for policing.

18. At the same time the police authority chair and PCC lead for fraud and cyber have written to PCCs highlighting the key areas where PCCs can make a difference, including prioritising fraud in local police and crime plans, using the monthly force fraud performance data to hold their force to account, and amplifying national protect campaigns in their local area.

### Force engagement

19. Following a strategic briefing in November 2021 attended by strategic economic crime leads from 41 forces, COLP has commenced a comprehensive force engagement plan to visit all forces and regions by the end of 2022 to identify good practice and provide support and guidance. Prioritisation of visits is informed by data taken from a 2021 capability self-assessment and performance data. The programme will help forces to identify opportunities to improve their fraud response and build on the findings of HMICFRS visits.

### Capability development

20. Lloyds Banking Group has joined forces with City of London Police to launch the industry's first pilot scheme using proceeds of crime to fund a series of fraud fighting and victim support programmes across the country. This includes expanding the Dedicated Card and Payment Crime Unit by funding a new specialist team to track down criminals through cyber investigations, which can lead to disrupting other illegal activity often associated with fraud such as drugs and people trafficking. The money will also be used to continue the roll out of the Economic Crime Victim Care Unit (NECVCU) which provides support, advice and aftercare to victims nationally.

## **CONCLUSION**

21. This report provides an overview of the NLF outcomes and highlights a selection of activities being delivered in pursuit of these outcomes.