

**Leadership to create public value:  
A case study of an initiative to address rural crime**

**Final Report**

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**March 2017**

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## **Introduction**

This paper is concerned with understanding leadership to create public value. It explores these ideas through an analysis of a case study of an initiative in a police force to address rural crime. Both leadership and public value will be explained in more detail below.

This research project is part of a wider programme of research being carried out by The Open University's Centre for Policing Research and Learning. The research aims to improve the practical understanding of public value and how police leaders can enhance it. The concept of public value has gained increasing attention from academics and practitioners alike, but there is still a dearth of empirical studies which examine how public value is recognised, created or destroyed in practice (Hartley et al. 2016). This case study aims to provide new research which will add to insights about public value.

The team exploring leadership to create public value through case studies consisted of three academics, and two police officers, on secondment to the university, in a co-research team (Hartley and Benington, 2000).

The wider work on leadership to create public value consisted of three key elements:

- A literature review carried out by academics (Hartley et al, 2017)
- Two case studies of leadership in action, based on cases which involve police leaders (one case reported here)

- A study of the policing priorities of the police, public service partners and the public as a means to examine public value. The study used Q methodology to examine policing priorities (Vo et al., 2017).

This case study is of a rural crime initiative, provoked by strong public feeling against hare coursing, an illegal activity which can be found in certain rural isolated areas. Hare coursing makes local people who work on the land feel unsafe and it is also seen as a signal crime which indicates that other crimes may be being committed. Of particular concern locally was the theft of farm equipment and heritage crime (e.g. church roofing materials). The study looks at how the rural crime initiative came into being through analysing how the police service leadership viewed the potential loss of public value if nothing was done, and the gains which could be achieved if an initiative was started up. The case then examines leadership in the local police team, and their work with community leaders to address hare-coursing. The study reflects on the complex situation in rural areas, where matters cannot be resolved simply through police resources, and where different stakeholders may have different views about the public value being created in the rural crime team initiative.

### **Public value**

There are various definitions and conceptualisations of public value, since the seminal work of Moore (1995). Hartley et al (2016) outline three somewhat different definitions all existing in the literature and Hartley et al (2017) extend this mapping. For our purposes here, we can briefly outline both the origins of public value theory and also the approach being adopted in this study.

Public value first came to prominence through the work of Moore (1995) and has been further developed by Benington (2011). They created a framework, which focused on the *added value* created by public services in particular (though also other sectors and individuals). They recognised that measures of added value needed to go beyond the counting of activities, or even the counting of outputs (e.g. stop and search, amount of intelligence submissions, number of arrests or convictions) to include ways in which public organisations contributed to the wider aims of society, for example creating a fair, just or peaceful world or enabling citizens to live confident, safe and fulfilling lives.

Using the Benington (2011) approach, which is widely recognised (e.g. Bryson et al, 2016) public value has two components. First, what the public indicate they value or see as important priorities, which is sometimes different from what they want. This involves professionals taking into account the values, needs and aspirations of citizens (individually and collectively) as the professionals design, provide, and evaluate services. The second element of public value is what adds value to the public sphere. Associated though slightly

different terms are ‘the common good’ or ‘the public interest’ (see Bozeman, 2002; Bryson et al, 2014). It is what adds political, economic, social, psychological or environmental value and it is concerned not just with immediate benefits but with safeguarding society and the planet for future generations. Public value can potentially be created by a variety of entities, including public organizations, private contractors, non-profits, volunteers and citizens (Moore and Benington, 2011).

This case study draws on the two dimensions of Benington (2011). Benington notes that what the public value and what adds value to the public sphere are sometimes in tension. What the public value is not always what is best for the longer-term good of society. This can be seen in policing, where the public may value particularly visible elements of policing (e.g. police officers on the beat) and may value less or appreciate less the resources required to contribute to, say, counter-terrorism or action against organised crime. Public servants may need to make choices of priorities which are not simply based on utilitarian views of value or what “the customers” want. Benington notes that public value is often contested and cannot be settled simply by measuring value. Different stakeholders may express different values and may need to find ways to come to some degree of (not necessarily total) consensus. In this sense, Benington (2015) notes that public value is “an essentially contested democratic practice” (see also Bryson et al, 2016).

Public value is sometimes mainly thought about in terms of what is added to the public sphere and Moore’s (1995) initial book is about *creating* public value but Benington (2011) also points out that public value can also be wasted or destroyed. Using public value stream analysis (Benington and Moore, 2011) or public value mapping (Alford and Yates, 2014) shows how individuals, groups or organizations can not only add but also undermine, waste or destroy public value, for example through incivility, or through misallocation of resources. So this research is alert to the full spectrum of possibilities in relation to public value. Furthermore, the contested nature of public value may mean that while value is added to the public sphere, there may be groups or stakeholders who lose out in terms of their own personal or group appropriation of public value. This will also be borne in mind in this research.

Policing provides an important context in which to explore public value, because the publics which people interact with are not only customers, but may be perpetrators of crime, victims, witnesses or vulnerable people at risk of coming to harm or harming others. What an individual values may not necessarily be in the best interests of society as a whole. Policing is a regulatory service where some people may receive a service which they do not wish to receive. They may be less ‘customers’ and more ‘obligatees’ (Moore, 2013; Alford, 2016). The fact that the police have state powers reinforces this.

*“...there are limits to the extent to which public services can regard those effected by the*

*services as customers whose wishes are to be met. Public organizations have the distinctive task of exercising the coercive powers of the state. They order, inspect and control. It is not necessarily helpful to treat as customers those required to take action by a public organization.” (Stewart and Walshe, 1992, p.514)*

The two cases, one reported here, are selected specifically to explore public value as a contested concept and where a regulatory service is being analysed.

Public value is an academic construct, which can be somewhat abstract and does not necessarily make sense to people working at the front-line or to members of the public. Consequently, the researchers talked with research participants about what people see as the priorities for policing and what is most valuable for the police to do.

## Leadership

There are many different definitions and conceptualisations of leadership (Yukl, 2012) and the only way to deal with the variety in the term’s use is to define it for any particular study (Hartley and Benington, 2010). For this study, leadership is viewed, not solely as about senior people in particular positions of formal authority but as about processes of mobilisation of others towards a particular purpose. For this study, leadership can be thought of as mobilising the attention, resources, meanings and practices of others towards particular goals, values and/or outcomes. Leadership may be part of the formal responsibility of a particular job or role (e.g. police sergeant, police and crime commissioner) but it is also exercised through informal channels and networks (e.g. opinion leaders, voluntary groups). Leadership may be exercised by individuals, by pairs, by teams, by organizations and by networks. The focus on leadership has a strong relationship element to it – mobilising others to behave or to commit in particular ways.

To the other tasks and purposes of leadership in general must be added further issues for public leaders to address. They may be at the centre of debates about public value or they may have to reflect on how the contestation over public value can be handled. To be effective in balancing different stakeholders’ perceptions and views of value, the research will explore whether and how leadership may require political astuteness or acumen as a set of skills in police leaders. Hartley et al, (2014) define political astuteness as follows:

*“Political astuteness is defined as ‘...deploying political skills in situations involving diverse and sometimes competing interests and stakeholders, in order to achieve sufficient alignment of interests and/or consent in order to achieve outcomes’ (Hartley et al. 2013, 24). This approach is neutral about outcomes, so political astuteness may or may not achieve public value outcomes (as defined by Benington and Moore 2011). It encompasses ‘small p’ as well as ‘big P’ politics – the informal as well as the formal. Thus ‘political’ is not solely about formal institutions and actors, nor even only about partisan politics, but also includes*

*political interactions with the wider set of issues, arenas and stakeholders referred to above.” (Hartley et al, 2014, p. XX*

### **Research questions and research design**

This report analyses a case study in a police force which includes a largely rural geographical area. We here give it the pseudonym “East Constabulary”. The case analyses the contexts in which public value issues arose and examines which leaders tried to resolve contention in public value, and how they did this. The case focuses particularly on police leaders but also notes the value created or undermined by other leaders in the case. The case is underpinned by three research questions:

1. How do public leaders perceive and conceptualise what researchers call public value in complex and contested situations?
2. How far do police and public have similar or different views about public value and how is that handled by leaders?
3. Does leadership with political astuteness help police leaders to create public value?

The case study is of an initiative to combat rural crime in Eastshire (the county where East Constabulary is located) by exploring whether and how public value is created through the work of a rural crime team. This case specifically examines leadership to create public value through tracking different stakeholder views of and behaviours concerning, illegal hare coursing in Eastern England. Hare coursing is sometimes seen as a ‘signal crime’ that indicates other problems in a locality or which raises anxieties about other problems.

### **Research Design and Methodology**

The decision was made to use a case study strategy for the research. Case studies are particularly valuable where there is an interest in examining social processes over time, and where there may be multiple perspectives on the situation (Yin, 2009). Case studies can also reveal aspects of context which shape how people behave or make choices in the case study (Hartley, 2004). They are also useful for studies which are primarily inductive – in that a theory is being explored in terms of how it plays out in rich detail.

The case study was based on the co-research method (Hartley and Benington, 2000) and using insider/outsider teams (Bartunek and Louis, 1996). Co-research involves creating a research team based on both academic and practitioner skills and expertise. In this case,

the practitioner undertaking fieldwork was a serving police officer, with knowledge of the law and with experience of policing in a different rural area of the UK. Insider/outsider research teams means that some of the team are embedded in the case field work while others are more removed, which enables both intimate knowledge of the case and also more distant questioning of the case.

The case study was based on multiple sources: interviews with a wide range of stakeholders with experience of the issues in the case; and documentary analysis of force reports and rural crime briefings and the local Police and Crime Plan.

The interview sample was decided by the whole team, drawing on additional information from East Constabulary. The interviews were selected to ensure key stakeholders in rural crime were included. This meant there were 13 interviews with: the Police and Crime Commissioner for East County; East Constabulary chief constable; several members of the rural crime action team; representatives from the National Farmers' Union, the Country Landowners Association and Countryside Watch and a church diocesan representative. The interviews included two members of the public, a gamekeeper employed by a landowner in East County whose land had been regularly disturbed by hare coursers, and a local farmer and business rural business owner. The public we interviewed were recommended to us by other participants during the fieldwork.

The 13 interviews were augmented by discussion (one by phone) with a traveller; and two traveller support workers. The travellers were included as people who were thought to commit hare coursing. The travellers were not from East County as despite energetic attempts to make contact, participation was not forthcoming. However, the research did include traveller perspectives from another county, which reduced legal complications. It was not possible, for legal reasons, to conduct the traveller interviews with the police officer member of the research team, so this interview was conducted by an academic.

The case study interviews were conducted by two members of the research team. Some of the interviews were conducted with both researchers present, other interviews with just one researcher when these took place on the telephone. In the main, interviews were recorded using Audionote software with each interview digitally recorded and notes taken contemporaneously in the software. The researchers used a semi-standard interview schedule comprising semi-structured interview questions. These were adapted to the varying situations and research participants. Appendix 1 shows an example of the main interview schedule.

### **The context of the case study, and hare coursing**

Given that context is a critical element in understanding a case study, the report now outlines the locality and the police rural crime action team (RCAT) which operates in that locality.

Case study 1 consists of a study of a rural crime action initiative within East Constabulary. It examines whether and how public value is created through the work of a rural crime team. East Constabulary RCAT was selected for study based on its location in a rural geographical setting. Rurality is a relatively unusual feature in published public value research. The study is informed by three phases: retrospective reporting on the period when East Constabulary had a rural crime team; then also based on retrospective reporting, what happened when it was disbanded, and thirdly and contemporaneously, what is happening now it has been re-established. The case concentrates particularly on the present, but current views of leadership and of public value are likely be influenced by what has happened in the past and several interviews included descriptions of what the situation had been previously. A central focus of the case study is the police leadership of the RCAT although leadership is also exercised by others in the case. In shortlisting East Constabulary RCAT as the case study site, the research team was interested in how illegal hare coursing was dealt with, as this presents several challenges for policing and for local communities.

Geographically, East County is mainly flat and arable, although it has several urban centres. 77% of East County is defined as rural with many people employed in agriculture, field sports, estate management and other rural businesses. Many large farms and estates border rural land in neighbouring counties resulting in many areas being isolated from their nearest police stations.

Hare coursing had been the catalyst for the reinstatement of the RCAT, though the lack of the RCAT had troubled communities for other reasons too. Hare coursing, is spoken of as a 'signal crime' that raises anxieties about other problems in a locality. Compared to many other parts of the UK, East Constabulary's flat landscape has resulted in a strong population of hares and a consequence is hare coursing. Hare coursing is illegal under The Hunting Act 2004 because it involves the hunting of a mammal by dogs. In addition, coursing may result in damage to crops, fields, gates and other property. Hare coursers visiting the area drive onto land in 4 x 4 vehicles and use dogs to chase hares across fields. Large bets can be placed by participants in what is described as a highly-organised activity that can see the offspring of 'good fancies' dogs being sold for £3,500 each.

Hare coursing may, at face value, appear a minority interest taking place in remote geographical areas, but over 4 months in late 2016/early 2017, there were 831 hare coursing incidents in East County. Furthermore, there can be collateral problems.

There had been reports of members of the public being threatened and intimidated if they tried to challenge those involved:



*'We'll smash your head in, we'll kill you' (Landowner on a threat made by a hare-courser).*

*'Farmers don't want to make complaint as they fear repercussions as many hare coursers are handy with their fists' (Police officer).*

*'It's only hearsay but I've heard of threats like we'll burn the farm down but it never happens – there is intimidation to try and prevent people taking matters to Court' (Police officer).*

Furthermore, it was felt by some members of the rural community that hare coursers took opportunities to commit other crimes while on the land:

*'Yes, people see (hare coursing) leads onto other crimes such as 'casing the joint' [...] for example, John Deere tractors are popular in in Eastern Europe' (Campaigning organisation).*

*'Hare coursing is linked to other issues - it damages crops, fields, gates and often leads to thefts of machinery' (Campaigning organisation).*

*'I don't know the percentages but in my police mind they are not blind to an opportunity – I've got no evidence to support this' (Police officer).*

Hare coursing is seen by the local community, from our interviews, as a 'signal crime', indicating that other crimes on farms, churches and rural businesses may be taking place. So the prevalence of hare coursing was seen by local people as an indicator of the success of their local police force. Seeing large numbers of hare coursers carrying out illegal activities without being challenged by the police had a significant impact on the confidence they had in their police force.

From the interviews, several people said that it is believed that many of those involved in hare coursing were from the traveller community. The traveller and traveller worker interviews suggested that hare coursing was valued by parts of the traveller community, in part as traditional and in part as a social gathering.

### **Earlier periods of addressing rural crime**

With increasing concern about hare coursing in East County, East Constabulary created an operation both to detect offences and to displace hare coursers. This led to the forming of the first RCAT team, consisting of police officers with a good understanding of rural communities and the issues they face. This was reported in in



However, when East Constabulary came under the financial pressures of austerity, the force had to make choices about where to cut resources and services. The RCAT was disbanded. This decision was based on weighing up services from a public value perspective. For instance, issues of threat, risk and harm such as domestic abuse, protecting vulnerable adults and children, and dealing with the most serious of offences were prioritised over rural crime. At a time of austerity resources had to be aligned accordingly to protect the public from the risks that the police as professionals knew they faced even where this was not evident to the public. This was taken by both the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and the Chief Constable, who described their role as finding a balance between what the public want with what the public need. For example, stating that he was unable to cover all priorities. the chief constable stated:

*“The public will often say to me that they want to see more police on the streets. What I often say it that even if I had the resources to do that or to have a cop behind every vehicle it would not protect them against other issues such as cybercrime, fraud etc. There has to be a balance of where you put your resources and a lot of issues people don’t know about unless they are affected directly about it” (Chief Constable).*

Because of the financial pressures, the RCAT was disbanded in 2012. Interviewees reported that this had led to an escalation of reported hare coursing incidents. The rural community and organisations such as the National Farmers Union (NFU), Country Watch (CW) and the Country Landowners Association (CLA) also highlighted what they considered as an increase in aggression used by hare coursers. Concerns were raised that when called, police response times were poor and on attendance officers had little knowledge of the remote areas and the issues faced by their communities.

*‘When the previous RCAT disbanded, it wasn’t good as our local police came from [small town] meaning that the time they got here the coursers had long gone’ (Gamekeeper).*

Acknowledging these concerns, East Constabulary implemented operations to target hare coursing and other types of rural crime, and while there were some successes, overall these were described to us as short-term initiatives that failed to placate the community. For example, the strategic lead for rural crime (of chief inspector rank) met with CW members who expressed frustrations that they were not receiving an appropriate service from the police. Both rural dwellers and the police became worried that a farmer would soon take the law into their own hands and this would lead to a ‘Tony Martin’ situation<sup>1</sup>:

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<sup>1</sup> Tony Martin was a farmer who shot dead an intruder to his farmhouse and injured another. He had previously complained to police about earlier burglaries. He was convicted of murder, reduced to manslaughter on appeal.

*'We had several barn meetings and there were rumblings of discontent [...] there were nasty incidents which led to fears of vigilantism. (Rural Organisation).*

*'After the meeting ended I thought have I got another Tony Martin here? Cases like Tony Martin show what can happen if action is not taken and that cost Norfolk Police £2 million so investing in the RCAT and preventing cases like that is a good investment when combined with all the other benefits" (Senior Police Officer).*

Having received numerous letters from residents and business owners echoing these concerns the Chief Constable attended the AGM of the CW. The meeting, attended by around 300 people, was later described by the Chief Constable as the most vociferous he had ever attended. People conveyed their feelings of isolation and intimidation to the police officers at the meeting and having spoken to people at the meeting it was recognised by the Force that changes to tackling rural crime were highly desirable

In a short period of time by organizational standards (a few weeks), the RCAT was re-formed, with a workforce of 10, consisting of a sergeant, five police constables, a detective constable, a community support officer and two special constables. This is a small team to cover a large area and with a big remit. The unit was given appropriate vehicles and equipment and all officers were selected on the basis that they had a personal link or specific interest in the rural community.

Since being re-created the RCAT team has achieved notable success, not just in challenging hare coursers operating within the county but also in disrupting an organised crime group involved in heritage crime (stealing from isolated churches). For example, a RCAT police officer described how the team has introduced a strategic approach to investigating crimes of the metal, lead, whereas this was previously filed at the point of reporting without any officers attending. This had led to a group ten people involved in lead crime being arrested and bailed by identifying common evidence at different locations. On the other hand, recent rural press has reported, in February 2017, that hare coursing is increasing, though the research team does not have the evidence to verify this statement.

Although the number of hare coursing incidents in East County remains challenging, feedback from the rural community has been very positive about the impact that the RCAT team has had. In February 2017 the local paper reported that East Constabulary had logged 831 hare coursing incidents over four months to January 2017 (the winter months being more active times for coursing), and that the specialist RCAT team had reported 73 people involved in coursing offences, and the seizure of five dogs, and 31 vehicles.

It has been reported anecdotally that hare coursers were talking amongst themselves about the RCAT and operating elsewhere to avoid their attention. It was also stated that hare coursers are making calls to the police control room to ask to speak to an RCAT officer in an attempt to see whether they are on duty.

*'When the team isn't on duty and others have to deal with the crime there is not the same service. Not their fault as they do not have the exposure to have the knowledge' (Campaigning organisation).*

*'When the RCAT are not on duty the response from other officers is not so good' (Gamekeeper).*

In sum, the reformed RCAT was the decision of East Constabulary police as an organisation. This was influenced and informed by wider issues of 'publics' and 'governance' who applied pressure on the police. The police needed to exercise leadership in weighing up different risks, different options, and different resourcing.

### **The dynamics of public value: creating or enhancing public value**

In this case, various elements of public value issues were found to be at stake. These were the value of the RCAT team as a public service and what it contributes to the rural community, and secondly, the clear view of the public in what they wanted as a service, as identified in Country Watch's AGM but also in the joint working between different publics (including CW, NFU and CLA). The case shows the public exercising what they want or value by both petitioning the police and, as we shall see, collaborating with them to create a public service. These two public value issues were important as they fed into the reputational value of the Force as being 'seen' to do something.

This paper analyses what public service the RCAT team provides to create public value, and what this contribute to the rural community. We also examine how the public themselves add public value.

**Reassurance** This is a key element of public value added by the RCAT that was inferred from various stakeholders. The RCAT team is seen to add and create value by providing a sense of reassurance for those living in the country, reducing their sense of isolation and acknowledging that the countryside can make people feel unsafe:

*'The RCAT provides a huge comfort to the rural community, people can see that the police are taking the issue seriously as there is a dedicated team' (Campaigning organisation).*

*'In rural areas there may be certain vulnerable groups who feel unsafe [...] the way the police deal with these sorts of people really helps' (Church representative).'*

*Them knowing we are here and hooking up with (the community)...we're making links and networks and building confidence' (Police officer)*

The increased visibility created by having a small team appears to add considerable value, reducing fear:

*'...people say they have seen the team out and about and can see they are trying' (Police officer).*

*'Farmers realise they now have something. The RCAT are very visible and will make themselves known to the farmers, this results in a real communication with over half the population living rurally. (Police and Crime Commissioner)*

The ability to link with the community was reflected in an interview with a senior police officer who stated that although *'you can have all sorts of models looking at demand, ultimately you are dealing with human beings and the nature of concern'*. For this interviewee, the RCAT was about trying to allay the fear of crime and he said that feedback suggested this was happening.

From interviews it appeared that the rural communities were realistic about the amount of public service that can be provided by such a small team. They recognised that there would be times when the RCAT was not available to them. They were very aware that at a time of budgetary pressures the team was a significant investment for East Constabulary. They understand the RCAT is not a 24/7 team and that they cannot be everywhere covering the whole county.

However, the RCAT also has symbolic value: knowing there are officers focussing on rural crime has led to increase in public confidence.

Reassurance sounds a somewhat bland term and of course it is difficult to put a monetary value on this. However, a consideration of its polar opposites – fear, intimidation, isolation and worry indicate how valuable it can be.

**Confidence** From our interviews, the rural community in East Constabulary now has increased confidence with the RCAT. Having dedicated contact details for the team makes the community feel part of the team and there is clearly an *"in it together spirit"* which has brought benefits to both the police and the community:

*'The benefit of the RCAT is you are dealing with a specialist team who understand the issues and context of what's happening I think this benefits farmers, rural business, the NFU and the CLA' (Gamekeeper).*

*'The majority of the time (beneficiaries) will be farmers but others also gain such as church users' (Campaigning organisation).*

*'People can see that the police are taking the issue seriously as there is a dedicated team' (Campaigning organisation).*

*'The new RCAT boys are country lads and seem to know the background' (Gamekeeper)*

*'Most of them have a farming background and their knowledge can be useful in gaining confidence' (PCC).*

**Listening, talking and taking action.** Part of the value created by the RCAT was the talking and listening that took place between the RCAT and the community. The overwhelming

impression we got we got was that although it is important to have financial support and good equipment, the public value of listening is crucial for reassuring the community in their isolation and fear. Communication to deliver public value was discussed in many interviews. This included poor communications: frustrations with the 101 system, being unable to get hold of officers, pass on information or receive updates led to the public feeling issues were not being addressed or listened to. By contrast, the RCAT team taking the time to listen to the community's frustrations and find a solution and act on concerns was beneficial. Relatively simple measures have ensured the community feel valued including the policing having business cards and a dedicated RCAT email address and telephone number. Regular information bulletins and a monthly newsletter from the RCAT inspector tried to ensure the public were informed of team activities. As RCAT processes embedded and officers spent more time with the community, including joint work on some operations, confidence between the police and the community has increased. Several interviewees spoke of the fact that they were now on first name terms with the officers and therefore felt far more willing to pass information to them as they acted on it:

*'R' (police sergeant) is very proactive and so are all the team' (Gamekeeper). 'We conducted a joint operation with [the gamekeeper] which led to a good positive job in area – it's good to have that co-ordination' (Police officer).*

The fact that they heard what happened to the information shared and how it may have assisted in dealing with an offence encouraged them to collaborate again.

**Legitimacy** The RCAT team was seen as having legitimacy in that they demonstrated to rural residents that they understood rural issues. This was shown culturally: interviewees identified issues such as knowing the right language or dressing like the rural community. Comments included

*'He looks and acts like a gamekeeper but he is a police officer...I went to a meeting on poaching and he was wearing the classic rural uniform of pullover and patches and went down well as fitted in – a perception thing – but this helped' (Community organisation member).*

*'I have always worked within a rural community and I come from a farming background. I am local, East County born and bred. This gives me provenance and as all the (RCAT) team are from a farming background we know the characteristics of the farm. i.e. we know if people are exaggerating the costs of crime' (Police officer).*

It was beneficial that the RCAT included officers from a rural background as they could make the right first impression to gain the confidence of victims and worried residents. An example of a stolen combine harvester and pump was cited. Because the officer knew relevant technical terms and the impact of its theft on farming, this made the whole interaction between police and victim easier and relevant.

This contrasted with the loss of confidence in policing and loss of legitimacy when the attending officers were not knowledgeable about rural matters.

*'When the previous RCAT disbanded it wasn't good .....a lot of the coppers didn't know the difference between a hare and a rabbit' (Gamekeeper).*

He had also expressed his feelings of isolation when tackling a group of hare coursers. He lived in a remote location took the local police at least 25 minutes to get to and stated officers had problems locating him as they did not know the area.

**Avoidance of vigilantism** The restoration of the RCAT had reduced the likelihood that rural residents would take matters into their own hands. This had been a distinct possibility before the RCAT was reformed:

*'We almost got to the point where vigilante action would have happened - if the RCAT was removed now then there would be a huge loss of confidence (Campaigning organisation).*

*'There was much organisation between gamekeepers and landowners but not repeatable as people were going to break into vigilantism' (Gamekeeper).*

**Tackling rural crime** Given that hare coursing is seen as a 'signal' crime, the RCAT was seen to add value because it was in touch with rural communities and was engaged in pursuing other offences (heritage crime, farm equipment crime. The term 'rural crime' can perhaps be unhelpful. The types of crime that affect the rural community can be significant, e.g. plant theft can be of high value, damage to machinery can affect critical crop and animal schedules, threats of violence can be intimidating and affect self-confidence and damage to crops can affect yields. If crimes of similar value or impact occurred in urban areas there would perhaps be less debate about resourcing. Applying the word 'rural' seems to alter people's perception of the level and extent of crime activities.

**Co-production** The realistic view which the key stakeholders appear to hold about the work which the RCAT is able to undertake seems to be associated with a willingness to work with the police on some initiatives to prevent or catch hare coursers.

Rural communities can be remote and isolated from their local police service, and this has meant that communities have attempted to take control of situations to manage them.

Their willingness to play an active role is augmented by working closely with the police to challenge hare coursing, demonstrated by several recent joint operations with the RCAT.

### **The dynamics of public value: losing or displacing public value**

While so far the research has explored the added value of having an RCAT team this next section examines where public value may be lost, or destroyed.

**Frustration at the earlier withdrawal of RCAT service** Interviewees identified a key factor was the frustrations at what the public perceived as a lack of service after having experienced the benefits the earlier RCAT:

*'the organisation (police) started pushing back and said it was not a priority and then it was taken away! We had made good progress as well with reports of hare coursing down' (Campaigning Organisation). '*

*'We felt really let down, as if we didn't have a police force' (Gamekeeper). 'Farmers felt they had borne the brunt of the cuts as they saw their team disappear' (PCC)*

While this can only be assessed, not measured precisely, it seems that the police suffered from a loss of support – people felt let down. These were the conditions that had the police concerned later at the possible rise of vigilantism (see earlier). With the frustrations identified in the interviews and the risks cited in organisational documents, it is evident that ignoring the requests for a new team could have led to longer term damage about how the organisation was viewed.

**Loss of confidence** An additional example of destroyed public value was when urban police officers turned up at a location and did not appear to know what they were doing:

*'Most of the non RCAT local coppers are not really rural officers...we called the police out and a young PC pulled me over [in my vehicle]...she had no idea about hare coursers' (Gamekeeper).*

*'There are elements I get frustrated with around communication [...] when the RCAT isn't on duty and others have to deal with the crime, there is not the same service. It's not their fault as they do not have the exposure or have the knowledge' (Campaigning Organisation).*

These comments indicate that the police may lose credibility at such times, with the risk that a poorly managed incident will become a shared community story that undermines added value. Poor relationships, not being able to respond quickly or not knowing the 'lingo' may undermine trust and increase fear.

**Withdrawal of cooperation without the RCAT service** Prior to the re-creation of the RCAT the gamekeeper stated he felt he did not have a police service and although he had been subject to threats and intimidation he did not feel it worth reporting and did not divulge details of such incidents to his family as he did not want them to be concerned. He was often alone and facing a group of four or five hare coursers in 4 x 4's with dogs who have been known to drive their vehicles at people. When the police arrived, they would be unlikely to have any experience of dealing with hare coursers and the type of offences that may have been committed. Reluctant to use the 999 phone line the game-keeper



attempted to use 101, but as he often had to wait a considerable time for a response he stopped reporting.

The very specific threat to property and person illustrates the strength of this interviewee's feeling at the lack of a meaningful police response.

Similar thoughts were expressed by CW, the NFU and the CLA who spoke not only about the financial impact of rural crime but also its personal impact on the rural community. A key theme was that of the isolation and fear felt from living in a remote location a long distance away from the police.

**Displacement** The very success of the RCAT team in East county may have diverted hare coursing to neighbouring counties. Has hare coursing reduced overall across this region of England? We have been unable to determine this within the resources of the case study but it is an interesting question. As researchers, we did not investigate the extent of force discussions with other forces about displacement, although we understand there is well-established partnership working, including in a tri-force alliance regionally.

On the RCAT intervening in hare coursing it was stated

*'I don't know if it stops them but I expect it drives them out of area' (Gamekeeper). 'East Constabulary being a hostile environment for those involved in rural crime probably has a knock-on effect on other counties' (Police Officer).*

*'When the RCAT is mobilised the hare-courers move to a neighbouring county' (Campaigning organisation).*

*'Have [county to west] seen a rise? Yes, it has affected [three other counties] ...it's likely to be due to the fact we have displaced it all out of East Constabulary. The clear message is don't go coursing in East Constabulary! (Senior police officer).*

It was stated that displacement is 'only a theory' with no hard evidence. However, displacement suggests that public value is in some circumstances a zero-sum game (unless prevention is undertaken).

### **Are there any public value conflicts and contentions in this case?**

Public value conflicts and contentions were mainly explored by asking about police priorities and societal needs. Additionally, we identified public value contention and conflict linking to the decommissioning of the first RCAT team, as well as crime displacement to other areas. Lastly, we identified issues related to 'public voice', particularly the voice of travellers in the rural community.

Firstly, we asked interviewees about the RCAT as a service and whether other police priorities are being neglected by putting resources into it, as well as short term and long term gains. Responses were respectful that there were competing needs in society, as well as being supportive of the RCAT. Typical responses were:

*'You could never compare rural crime with child abuse, so people understand resources are needed there but also that as they pay taxes they should have some support' (Campaigning organisation).*

*'I am aware of resources and limits - us round here are really pleased with RCAT. They do what they say they'll do, they nick them and they mess up their routine. (Gamekeeper).*

Respect for competing priorities, respect for the RCAT, and the need to invest in the community was near unanimous. However, one respondent was critical of the RCAT:

*'Personally, I am totally cynical about things like this. I think it is a PR exercise'.*

He questioned how a team such as the RCAT could compete with international networks who run rings around teams such as the RCAT. This person identified a well-established claim that by taking a strategic perspective, perhaps by regionally forces joining-up, this will lead to increased public value by focusing on larger crime activities. He gave the examples of lead theft, stating that thieves take from one county and sell in another. He also added that there had previously been a national initiative to manage lead theft but this had been disbanded.

*'We should try and take a national perspective and this would be better. I think it's better to pool resources and this would be more effective e.g. lead theft. (Church representative).*

Secondly, there are questions about how to prioritise different pressures on policing services. Public value might be enhanced without a rural crime team, a view which had led to the earlier disbanding of the original RCAT. A senior police officer stated:

*'The public will often say to me that they want to see more police on the streets...what I say is that even if I had the resources to do that or to have a cop behind every vehicle it would not protect them against other issues such as cybercrime, fraud etc. There has to be a balance of where you put your resources and a lot of issues people don't know about unless they are affected directly about it' (Senior Police Officer).*

His statement was a clear example of balancing what Benington (2011) describes as what the public indicate they value as important is sometimes different from what adds value to the public sphere. Judging this balance is a difficult task for Police and Crime Commissioners

and Chief Constables and for a time, before the RCAT was re-introduced, East Constabulary police reflected that they had got this wrong.

Public value also needs to be weighed up in terms of short-term versus long-term gains. Maintaining a relatively small team of police experts who understand the 'modus operandi' of those involved in rural crime, such as hare coursers and those committing heritage crime, is likely to achieve valuable results for the rural community and enhance public value for the Force. If the Force disbands the RCAT again they are likely to see community confidence diminish alongside an increase in rural crime and complaints. There would be a loss of specific rural knowledge, community relationships and co-production, and a loss of intelligence about offenders and likely offenders.

Lastly, perhaps the most contentious issue for public value in this case is whether travellers are part of the rural community and should be considered by the police as having their own voice and viewpoint.

Interestingly, the researchers asked interviewees if they had spoken to travellers, (widely believed to be the hare coursers) but only one interviewee said they had known a traveller personally as a child. This interviewee stated that he came from a farming background and they and they had let an older traveller use an area of grass free of charge to graze his horses. Because of this this interviewees' family did not have any issues with travellers as the older traveller had kept the other travellers 'in check'. This practice was confirmed by one of the traveller team as being 'inferred right', with an older traveller given land to fly graze on but keeping an eye on other travellers.

Although several interviewees described hare coursing as a traveller tradition, as well as a crime, the view largely about travellers was:

*'We as an organisation haven't had links with traveller's organisations - we don't get involved with hare coursers - police do that!' (Campaigning organisation).*

This raises the question of whether there is a barrier between the police, rural organisations and travellers that inhibits the opportunity and potentially undertake preventative work with travellers. This in no way detracts from the fears and threats interviewees raised, but we identified a public value tension about the labelling and interpretation of traveller behaviour. Interviewees largely spoke of the traveller community as a threat, or as involved in criminal activity, with no differentiation between hare coursers and the wider traveller population. It seemed that, on the whole, travellers, the rural community and the police only met at points of contention and conflict. As researchers we did not find any discussion about preventing hare coursing or negotiating to reduce it, though there was work with other communities in East County. For example, the Chief Constable stated that the police

had put on sessions for the Pakistani community, and that he has visited mosques and synagogues.

To complement the other stakeholders, the research team initiated some brief discussions with a travellers' team and a traveller (though not from the same county). Corroborating the view of some of the interviewees, hare coursing was described by a traveller support worker – an ex-traveller herself – as a traditional activity that was originally engaged in by low-income traveller men. She thought that coursing by travellers and gypsies is decreasing for several reasons including younger people being less interested in coursing as a sport, the enforcement of roadside encampments, and more travellers moving into residential housing.

Her colleague had a similar view, stating that hare coursing has a strong social aspect by being able to show off, protect one's honour and enjoy each other's company. Coursing was described as part of travellers' DNA with the social aspects as important as the money. However, he acknowledged that coursing could make a mess of land, describing young travellers as '*an antisocial bunch*' who are not afraid of prosecution, and that coursers are not particularly bothered by the police. In his county (not East County) asked about prevention, he stated he works with a police sergeant in his multi-agency team who primarily deals with illegal encampments but also communicates police issues in a preventative way. In that county, this was enhanced by a previous PCC and a senior judge introducing themselves to local travellers' sites, including one of the tougher sites.

If prevention is to be effective he added this needs to be expressed to travellers as the potential loss of vehicles, money and property through seizure by the police, although he acknowledged that how to communicate this in practice was problematic. He described it as '*a door to door and person to person thing*', by police taking a proactive and preventative stance through having stands at horse fairs, visiting sites or having articles on the repercussions of coursing in Traveller's Times.

Interestingly, and corresponding with the views of interviewees, he felt that travellers could also respect police officers who come from rural backgrounds and know their culture. He gave the example of a local officer who took this approach and it had helped. Enhancing this, the traveller workers suggest police forces should communicate more on issues, perhaps by using multi-agency approaches he had found beneficial in his own area. Police officers of different ranks, PCCs - and even judges – could introduce themselves, perhaps when they are new in role. However, he also said that although travellers don't mind people visiting them, they may want something in return, for example help with filling a form.

*'I think it's useful to have a designated police officer to liaise with travellers.'*

The traveller interviewee described hare coursing as a tradition that is more important than the money and the bets. He saw hare coursing is a time-honoured tradition, stating that although there has always been fox hunting his community and their sports are seen differently:

*It's prejudicial as high court judges go hunting and for us it's our tradition as well' 'I live in the countryside as well, but I feel I am prejudiced against'.*

### **Public value leadership**

Leaderships was exercised by different people in a variety of roles and organizations. The purposes of their leadership was quite varied. This section now explores that exercise of leadership. At the end of this theme we provide some observations on political astuteness in the exercise of leadership.

Several officers within the police were concerned to mobilise attention, resources and people to particular purposes. The actions of the East Constabulary chief constable were instrumental in the forming of the RCAT, given his strategic role in the organization. In interview, the chief constable commented that the decision to reform the RCAT was outside of the usual processes in order to expedite the decision. He said he placed a high value on wanting to do the right thing and listening to the community and these influenced his thinking, particularly after attending the highly emotional Country Watch AGM. The Chief Constable talked of re-creating the RCAT being "*the right thing to do*". He said he recognised that others in the force had worked hard to solve the hare coursing and other rural problems and they now needed his support. The chief inspector who was the lead for rural crime had tried holding days of action, had met with various rural groups and had set up numerous initiatives. This had made the decision-making process easier for the Chief Constable as he had the evidence that other measures were unable to address rural communities' concerns or reduce rural crime.

His leadership was described by others as genuinely motivational. The RCAT officers felt that by '*sticking his neck out*' the chief constable deserved loyalty: the RCAT officers wanted to ensure the team was a success to validate the chief officer's decision.

*'The Chief is very proactive and that helps us out - everything seems to be more integrated' (Senior Police Officer).*

*'We are now seen as leading re church crime - my bosses are really behind me' (Police Officer).*

The RCAT thought that some officers in the force were less convinced by the initiative, particularly initially. They said they had to ensure that the RCAT retained its key focus:

*'Because of where RCAT sit as uniform cops they are still seen by some senior detectives as a group of officers that can be used for other tasks rather than looking to use their own staff...I have to kick back and kick back' (Senior police officer).*

Although some comments were described as 'banter' we got the impression that there has perhaps been some disquiet about the reinstatement of the RCAT, but which had diminished with the success of the team, which was now leading to people wanting to join the team.

*'People want to join the RCAT as it is seen as front line, chasing down suspects and getting the opportunity to be pro-active' (Senior police officer).*

*'There is a waiting list for RCAT. When people see you are doing lots of pro-active stuff they are getting interested as it is different from just shift work...and they are jealous of our Land Rover! (Police officer)'*

Leadership was not solely positional at the strategic apex of the police force. The chief inspector strategic lead for rural crime also exercised leadership by meeting regularly with people involved in the rural community, including attending barn meetings and events that had been organised by the CW. He reassured attendees at what was planned to be a small CW meeting in a village pub, where, contrary to expectation a larger group materialised: "50 people turned up". The chief inspector still took the floor for two hours at a meeting that was described by one interviewee as 'salty'. Interviewees said there was anger at this meeting but that they also respected that the chief inspector had stayed for the whole meeting. It was clear from interviews with the NFU, CLA and CW that they hold him in high regard and recognised that he was doing all he could to champion their cause.

In addition, political leadership was exercised by the elected Police and Crime Commissioner for East Constabulary. As an elected official who had been involved in politics since 1993, though in post as PCC for less than a year at the time of the interview. The PCC said his main aim was to do the 'right thing' for citizens. Being passionate about East County, he stated his role was to listen to the public and try and respond to their needs while managing expectations.

He spoke positively about the RCAT and its role, with his comments suggesting that his view was strategic (covering the whole county, and trying to ensure the police link up with other public services). He positively acknowledged the role of other leaders connected to the RCAT as important for operational matters.

The need to both be responsive but also shaping of expectations can be seen as a key leadership task. To obtain the views of the public, the PCC said he talked to individuals,

groups, principal partners as well as engaging in discussions about local public services devolution:

*'I have a monthly surgery and just by 'walking about' people engage with me. I have an open-door policy and people can come and see me'.*

The PCC linked this to a key tenet of public value theory - similar to the chief constable – when he stated:

*'...if you just delivered what the public want it would be a bobby on every street! My role is balancing what the public want with what they need while keeping an eye on other issues such as cyber-crime' (PCC)*

As a political leader, the research team came to the view that the PCC's political role was important in providing support for the context within which the RCAT sat. It was, as one interviewee remarked:

*'... a mechanism for listening, doing things well and challenging institutional approaches to help the police look at things in a different light' (Campaigning organisation).*

The PCC's role was to exercise leadership by challenging but also by providing legitimisation to act in times of challenge and crisis.

While within the police service, there was leadership by hierarchy (in terms of rank), the research team also identified that leadership was being exercised in ways which supported innovation and experimentation and which engendered a more distributed leadership (within the RCAT and also working across organizations).

Interviews strongly indicated the existence of a listening culture within the police force itself. The research team sensed that the management style was inclusive, perhaps a feature of the emergent nature of the team and the context surrounding the reformation of the RCAT, supported by respect for the skills the officers brought to their work.

The research team also identified dispersed leadership, but it is important to separate dispersed leadership from dispersed tasks and roles. The dispersed tasks and roles we heard about, for example autonomy and respect given to front line police officers, was, arguably, a product of dispersed leadership. An example, is the actions of the Chief Inspector leading the RCAT who had taken time to go out and meet farmers and others who had been unhappy with the police service, listening to complaints and finding solutions to problems that they have identified

This dispersal of tasks appeared to be representative of the RCAT culture – a toleration for new ideas and challenge by staff, and a respect for their skills. However, this was augmented by the dispersed leadership we identified among the different senior police



officers involved in the project. For example, we saw this amongst the chief constable, the chief inspectors, the RCAT sergeant and the RCAT detective. For example, the chief constable stated

*'...although I am conscious I am the chief, we have an environment here where people do feel able to offer a different opinion and aren't afraid to speak up' (Chief Constable).*

The recreation of the RCAT came over as a sense of an experiment - an opportunity to learn together, a learning culture valued by the chief inspector strategic lead and his colleagues. The RCAT was reported to the research team as not being defined as a set of procedures, but as people building on the approach that had existed in the original RCAT, now operating in areas of work where they did not always know what the problem was but were prepared to explore and find out more about it.

There was also shared leadership in tackling rural crime. This was not just the responsibility of the police, but was enhanced by leadership between the police, the NFU, the CLA and CW. The police had to cover large distances and had to sieve and weigh different aspects of intelligence about crime and potential crime. To clarify what a particular problem was and who was 'doing what' there was a necessity to separate truth and rumour, including a threat of vigilantism and even a threat of murder. The police were unable to do all of this on their own because of the size of the RCAT, but also the geographical issues. With too few police, too large a geographical area and too much unpredictability about what they could do, the other agencies could contribute to the work of policing. This can be seen as a form of co-produced leadership.

In this co-production context, the police however gave strategic leadership. The strategy for rural crime was seen in the rapid production of the RCAT recreation proposal and was evident in various force documents analysed by the research team. The documents that were rapidly written after the CW AGM were very clear at setting out a focused purpose and mission that provided the central 'public value proposition' underpinning the recreation of the RCAT. By succinctly setting out what the Force wanted to achieve - and pulling it together quickly. This enabled them to work with various organizations and individuals within a framework.

The research team noted a 'dance of networks and partnerships' in the broader context of the RCAT, including multi-agency meetings, partnerships and opportunities to network, (such as three monthly meetings with statutory agencies the NFU and the CLA, Rural Crime Forums, County Trust Meetings and an Ecclesiastical Crime Conference) . These appeared to be exploratory and collaborative, rather than governing the work of the RCAT. Fostering an emerging understanding of problems and how they may or may not be shared was a further illustration of shared leadership in the search for public value.

There are therefore a number of leaderships being exercised in this case.

Political astuteness in leadership is evident from some interviews. A key aspect of political astuteness is having the skills to read the situation and discern that there may be different stakeholders, each with different goals, values or priorities. Such leadership does not assume commonality of purposes but explores how interests may differ and therefore how competing interests may be influenced or built into some degree of consensus (but unlikely to be full consensus, Hartley, 2017).

For example, the chief constable's support of the RCAT and recognition that rural crime needed addressing after the CW meeting, can be seen as exhibiting leadership with political astuteness, He said:

*'...as you become more senior you deal with a different level of stakeholder with who you want to work collaboratively with in order to improve the lives of people'.*

He explained that there were sometimes approaches from other organisations that could be difficult to manage and it was important to be co-operative within limits, but his focus was ultimately ordinary members of the public.

He recognised that his decision to recreate the RCAT was outside of normal force processes:

*"You can have all sorts of models looking at demand etcetera but ultimately you are dealing with human beings and the nature of concern."*

Reconstituting the RCAT meant that the reputation and standing of the East police service was not damaged, in the eyes of key stakeholders, by the issues about rural crime at that time.

The PCC felt that the RCAT was an example of a recent positive achievement he could talk about, but he said he was also focused on longer term issues, for example joint working with other blue light services and plans to share back office functions.

As for the chief constable, the PCC said that leadership involved fostering a wide network of relationships. Within the force the latter thought it was also important to be seen:

*'From a policing perspective, I have become more visible to officers such as attending awards nights, passing out parades'.*

In sum, exercising leadership and being politically astute are not easily divisible, especially at senior levels. In East Constabulary, this means 'doing the right thing' for the public, using resources effectively, but with one eye on reputation to ensure that the standing of the organisation or individual leader is not damaged. The PCC seems to be offering 'political cover' for the police force and although not exercising the Chief Constable's operational leadership, provides a legitimising backdrop. Alongside the RCAT's support from the Chief Constable this suggests that the RCAT has both political and managerial support.

### **Discussion: What does this case tell us about leadership to create public value?**

The paper now turns to consider the broader themes arising from this detailed case study of hare coursing, as a signal crime, and the response of East Constabulary to try to tackle this and other rural crimes.

This case illustrates that public value cannot be measured solely in terms of performance outputs from the police. While the number of hare coursers caught, vehicles or dogs seized, or heritage criminals apprehended, this is not the only value being created in this locality. Reassurance, legitimacy and other values are also being created. Fear and isolation is reduced, the reputation of the police service is enhanced, and there is a greater willingness to work with the police, whether this is intelligence over crime and criminals or actually going out to stop hare coursers in joint operations.

The commitment to create public value is underpinned, from our interviews, with strong values (inputs) about public service. The research team encountered police who were passionate about what they did, with a desire to improve the lives of others. This was seen both strategically as well as operationally, for example:

*‘Before the RCAT went live officers in the team were very passionate about wanting to be on the team and my decision may have helped with that’ (Chief constable).*

*‘When we started the RCAT I went to see some farmers and the first question they ask is do you know what farming is about? When we were able to speak their language it really took the temperature down and they accepted us. (Senior Police Officer)*

The connection with the concerns of the rural residents was also about a cultural matching of the police officers to the lives of those they are serving: A special constable was described as:

*“He looks and acts like a gamekeeper but he is a police officer.....he understands issues and that gives confidence to rural people.....I went to a meeting on poaching and he was wearing the classic rural uniform of pullover and patches and went down well as fitted in.....it was a perception thing.....but this helped’.*

Similar statements were made by RCAT officers themselves with a front-line officer remarking:

*‘I have always worked within rural community and I come from a farming background. I am local, East Constabulary born and bred. This gives me provenance and as all the team are from a farming background we know the characteristics of the farm’.*

This might be called ‘symbolic public value’. It provided a sense of the police being ‘one of us’ and gave reassurance in a context where there was high fear and a lack of trust.

Ensuring sufficient training to enable this attunement and the deployment of key rural knowledge may be important:

*'I can't pick out individuals but it doesn't help when police are moved from urban to rural areas without training'*

This is about knowledge not just looking the part:

*'I did environmental science at university so I know about things such as disturbing badger sets and issues with Japanese knotweed - some of that stuff has translated across into working in the RCAT (Police officer).'*

It is also helped by having the right equipment, which the RCAT felt had helped them achieve their goals. There had been earlier problems with not having the right vehicles and equipment to chase hare coursers across muddy fields and along country lanes. It was stated that

*'we now have the right cars and equipment so going in right direction' (Senior Police Officer).*

*'We got given Land Rover Discovery Sport cars which are ideal for our role and the Force has been very good with kit and will give if we ask normally' (Senior police officer).*

*'They have bought the right equipment which is good e.g. scramblers and pick-ups so they can go down tracks' (Rural business owner).*

This suggested that although value can be added by good team working, intelligence and rationalising resources, there were times when investment in good quality equipment was invaluable.

Public value was contested, either overtly or implicitly in various ways. First, the police force had to find ways to justify setting up the RCAT and sustaining it, against the pressures of other priorities. Before the re-creation of the RCAT:

*'The Force didn't focus on rural crime and we were off target in my view, the moans and groans were getting louder but rural crime was not seen as a priority in comparison with abuse issues' (Senior police officer).*

As professionals, the police were aware of other priorities, and also had to work within the Police and Crime Plan for the county. Justifying an RCAT is not understandable solely in its own right, but in terms of the pressures and priorities from other policing challenges.

Furthermore, there may be pressures between urban and rural crime priorities. This was not explicitly mentioned by either the political or the policing leader, but is a question to be considered.

Furthermore, public value is being assessed particularly from the perspective of rural landowners and workers, but less so from the perspective of the travellers, who are seen to be largely responsible for hare coursing and related farm damage and theft. There is less in this case about how to prevent hare coursing and instead the focus is largely on

apprehending those who are either doing it or disrupting the activities of those who are contemplating doing it.

Public value is also about prevention not just performance. Several interviewees, including the police, were worried about an outbreak of vigilante behaviours, which would be highly problematic. Keeping this in check and then dissipating the perceived need for such action can be considered adding public value.

In this sense, the case illustrates that public value is dynamic and may continually change. The pressures change according to the season (hare coursing is mainly a winter activity), and may change according to pressures on stakeholders, and on other policing priorities and pressures. Public value is not static.

The case illustrates the need to conceptualise public value as not only what the public (or publics) value or demand, but also what adds value to the public sphere. This is a case with a strong stakeholder set of voices (some of whom are quite influential locally and who can articulate their goals well), but there is not consensus over what should happen.

The case has a strong grounding in physical place and space. The problems – and the ways to address them – would be different in a dense urban area. This is leadership of place not just leadership of public value. The context shapes how different stakeholders see the situation, and place (geography, natural history, distances affect possible responses, as do the cultural and symbolic elements. The space in which the RCAT works is not neutral.

The case also has a strong grounding in relationships, across the rural communities and also with the police. Listening and talking – along with taking action – was seen as core to the police understanding local needs. These activities can also be seen in leadership terms, as providing a ‘holding environment’ (Heifetz, 1994) – a space (physical or emotional) where people can explore difficult issues and find ways to gain the resilience and determination to do something about those problems.

Turning to consider leadership, the case shows that leadership occurs in multiple arenas. It is not confined to those in senior positions of authority, but is distributed across different stakeholders. Parts of the public may lead (mobilise attention, resources and people towards particular goals) as well as the police or the PCC. The police have shown alertness to these other sources of legitimacy and authority. It can be argued that political astuteness is a necessary part of understanding the diverse and sometimes competing interests across different publics. Leadership is not just about strategizing or directing resources but involves interpreting the context which includes the various stakeholders in society.

Part of the role of leadership is the making of meanings (Smircich and Morgan, 1982) and sense-making, (Stansfield and Hartley, 2017; ‘t Hart, 2014). In this sense, the research team wondered whether the label of ‘rural crime’ may be unhelpful at times. The types of crime

that affect the community can be substantial: plant theft can be of high value; damage to machinery can affect critical farming schedules; threats of violence can be intimidating and affect self-confidence; and damage to crops can affect yields. If crimes of similar value or impact occurred in urban areas, would there be a similar reaction? Does applying the word 'rural' alter people's perception of the crime?

This case study started with an apparently obscure crime – hare-coursing – but has used the issue to tease out and explore some key issues about public value and about leadership in ways which aim to create rather than destroy public value. This is one case study in one geographical locality, but it has the potential to illustrate some wider issues about how public value is perceived and created. It shows the importance of digging beneath crime figures or police activities as an indication of police service worth, and incorporates a view about the well-being of whole communities.

It is possible that the value of the rural crime action team can be mapped using public value mapping processes (e.g Benington and Moore, 2011; Alford and Yates, 2014). The public value stream (Benington and Moore, 2011) for example, traces where value is added in a community from inputs (here, by police and by community volunteers aiding the police), from activities, from outputs and outcomes. The research team may consider undertaking this as a next step.

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### Public Value and Leadership - Interview Schedule

1. How do public leaders perceive and conceptualise what researchers call public value in complex and contested situations?
  2. How far do police and public have similar or different views about public value and how is that handled by leaders?
  3. Does leadership with political astuteness help leaders to create public value?
- I have read the information sheet or had the research explained to me
  - I understand what taking part in the research project will involve
  - I agree you can mention things that I say during interview, but not my name, in your reporting
  - I agree that the interview can be recorded (or notes taken if I am uncomfortable with recording)
  - I agree to take part in the project.

#### ***Introduction***

We are exploring how police priorities are agreed and progressed and are focused around a particular issue here in this locality: we may ask you about your own and your organisation's contribution to these issues and what benefits and tensions arise with or for the police and others. We are interested in your views about how the police exercise leadership in dealing with these issues.

Before we get started on the main interview, can you tell me a little about your role here in this organization or with this issue.

#### ***Service priorities (RQ1)***

- Can you tell us about the background to the project and your involvement?
- What is your role in this project?
- When did the project start? (probe: lifecycle and key events)
- What is the project's main purpose - has it altered over time?
- Who's involved with it and what is their contribution?
- Who thinks it's worth doing? Who thinks it is not worth doing?
- Is there a particular way it's helping at the moment and what do you think this project has added?
- Have you noticed any changes since this project started?
- Do you have a sense about whether it handles the issue better or worse than other police forces?
- What are your views about what this project will be achieving in 2 years' time?

- Do you think the police should be using their resources in a different way or on different priorities?
- What are the tensions that you notice in the project? How are those being handled? By whom?
- How has the project changed over time?

### ***Public and other stakeholders (RQ2)***

*From what you've told us, the project is involved with different people (summarise)*

- Who has meant to benefit from this project? In what ways?
- Are there people who lose out from this project? How are the police dealing with this?
- Does it have different meanings for the people you've mentioned - do they all see the police in the same way?
- What do these people get out of it and how do you think they see you as a service?
- Do their views help to develop the service?
- Do you have to do things that some people don't agree with in this project?

### ***Examples (RQ1 perceive and conceptualise public value in complex and contested situations?)***

We'd like to hear about what you personally think is going well, as well as any challenges. We'd welcome any examples you can provide.

- How do you sense things are going with the project? (Example)
- What do you feel most proud of what you are achieving yourself in this work?
- Do you think the project is doing a good job?
- What do you feel about that?
- Is the project moving in the right direction?
- Can you provide examples of things the project has done or you've been asked to do that undermine what you are trying to achieve?

### ***Leadership (RQ3)***

I want ask you about how you tackle the issues you've mentioned using your leadership skills to deal with different people who have different interests or goals.

Can you provide an example where leadership skills you, or a colleague, led to a good outcome or a bad outcome in this project? Can you describe what happened?

What have been the most challenging parts of handling differences and what did you do to tackle that?

***Probe leadership skills (link to stories, difficulties, narratives)***

- To do a better job and improve the service
- Communicating the complexity of what you do with the team and wider society (tangible/intangible)
- Dealing with difficult situations and people
- Multi-agency and partnership working
- Dealing with politicians and the PCC
  - Strategic priorities (e.g. multi-organisational/PCC)
- Public opinion and the media
- Getting more resources (e.g. budgets but also bringing new skills and knowledge into the service)
- Horizon scanning for things to improve the service
  - Anything else?

***Conclusion***

- What is the key issue for you arising from the issues we have discussed today?
- Anything else you want to add or you think is missing?

***End***

- Repeat confidentiality
- This interview will contribute to a report for the Open University Centre for Policing, in Spring 2017. I just want to reiterate that nothing you have said today will be identifiable as coming from you.