



HERTFORDSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

MAIN MEETING

Thursday 26 March 2015
Three Rivers District Council

MINUTES

Present

Cllr T Hutchings, Broxbourne Borough Council (Chairman)
Cllr Ms S Bedford, Three Rivers District Council
Cllr A Franey, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
Cllr C Goldstein, Hertsmere Borough Council
Cllr R Henry, Stevenage Borough Council
Mr B Jones, Co-opted member
Cllr J McNally, North Hertfordshire District Council
Dr M Ramsay, Co-opted member
Cty Cllr P Ruffles, Hertfordshire County Council

Also Present

Cllr C Storer (substitute), Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
Mr T Hewins, officer of the Police and Crime Panel
Mr D Lloyd, Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)
Mr R Wilsher, PCC Chief Executive
Ms D Currie, PCC Deputy Chief Executive
Mr C Connolly, Hertfordshire Constabulary

1 INTRODUCTION, APOLOGIES AND WELCOME

Apologies

Cllr M Alexander, East Herts District Council
Cllr Mrs A Brewster, St Albans City and District Council
Cllr S Gaygusuz, St Albans City and District Council
Cllr N Harden, Dacorum Borough Council
Cllr T Hunter, North Hertfordshire District Council
Mr I Laidlaw-Dickson, Co-opted member
Cllr R Martins, Watford Borough Council
Dr M Verlot, Co-opted member

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 29 JANUARY 2015

The Chairman noted that the reference to the 'British crime survey' by Dr Ramsay at the bottom of page five should say 'Crime Survey for England and Wales'.

The minutes of the meeting were agreed.

3 MATTERS ARISING

The Chairman advised that he had not received any update from the Local Government Association on the survey on police and crime panels recently undertaken.

The Chairman noted that the next meeting of the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel will be held on 15 April 2015. Cllr Bedford suggested that as the representatives on the Panel may change following the local elections in May 2015, it would be more appropriate to arrange a visit to the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel later in the year. The Chairman asked that the Clerk to the Panel writes to the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel and advises that members wish to attend a meeting later in the year and members of the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel are welcome to attend the next Panel meeting on 11 June 2015.

4 UPDATE FROM THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

The Commissioner introduced the update report. The Constabulary is trialling the introduction of a psychiatric nurse in the force control room who will work throughout the night and can offer help and advice. Mental health nurses are deployed alongside police officers in Thames Valley. It was noted that these are operational decisions and, therefore, within the remit of the Chief Constable.

The Commissioner advised that the refreshed website has been launched which can be viewed at <http://www.hertscommissioner.org>. It is a more interactive website and there is a 'transparency' section which includes information such as expenses. Parish newsletters are being produced so each local neighbourhood receives a report on what is happening in the area.

Cllr Henry welcomed the Mental Health Crisis Care Concordat as a great step forward and queried what scope there is for wider professionals, such as social workers, to be involved. The Commissioner advised that there are different approaches in different parts of the public sector. Mental health sufferers are often taken to the cells but this does not happen in Hertfordshire. People are taken to the most appropriate place and the introduction of a psychiatric nurse in the force control room is an example of best practice being implemented from other parts of the country. There is still a long way to go to join up the police force with other parts of the public sector to provide the best service for the end user.

Dr Ramsay asked about the role of Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) in tackling serious and organised crime. The focus of CSPs in the past has been on normal, local and everyday crime, whereas serious and organised crime is different to this and CSPs are not necessarily best placed. The Commissioner advised that the involvement of CSPs is nationally driven. All crime happens locally and in Hertfordshire the police setup replicates the borough boundaries, which means information from key partners is on a borough-wide basis. The CSPs will develop local profiles which will outline how partners are going to disrupt and hinder serious and organised crime. In other parts of the country these local profiles are based on other geographical boundaries.

Dr Ramsay noted that serious and organised crime often transcends borough boundaries. The Commissioner advised that the majority of serious and organised crime starts at the regional level but the crime is committed locally. The Home Office supports local engagement.

Cllr Storer raised concerns that the number of police officers at the ward level has reduced and the public are concerned at a lack of police officers covering larger areas. The Commissioner disagreed with this assessment. An additional 150 police officers will be recruited over the next year to ensure neighbourhood policing is maintained. There is broadly the correct number of police officers in each area and crime has fallen significantly, which can be partly attributed to local policing. There is still a need to ensure greater efficiency of policing which is why investment in mobile data is taking place. Hertfordshire is one of only a few areas in the country where there has been no increase in council tax and community policing has been maintained.

The Chairman asked on behalf of Mr Laidlaw-Dickson for an update on the initial meeting of the Commissioner's Community Scrutiny Panel. The Commissioner advised that the Community Scrutiny Panel is independent and will provide challenge to the current stop and search practices. It consists of nine people from a wide range of backgrounds. There has been a positive response locally to the measures outlined by the Home Secretary and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary. The latest performance data shows that the force arrest rate has started to show a steady improvement with a decline in the volume of stop searches taking place, an increase in the stop to arrest ratio from 10 per cent to 13 per cent and the total positive disposal rate standing at 27.3 per cent.

Cllr Ruffles requested a breakdown of who is stopped and searched. The Commissioner asked for a briefing paper to be circulated, which is available at:

<http://www.hertspcp.org.uk/Papers/2015-03-26/Paper%20to%20accompany%20the%20main%20meeting%20minutes%20-%20stop%20and%20search%20briefing%20paper%20for%20PCP.pdf>.

Cllr Ruffles asked for an update on child exploitation in the context of Hertfordshire. The Commissioner advised that Hertfordshire County Council had a scrutiny meeting on this topic which looked at Peterborough as a case study. There has been coverage in the Mercury newspaper that the county is not at risk of grooming gangs. The Commissioner commented that child exploitation can happen anywhere, which is why this is an issue regularly discussed with police officers and the lead member for children's services at Hertfordshire County Council. Whilst it is not a huge problem, it cannot be forgotten. The Government agree which is why child exploitation is a key strategic area for policing.

Cllr Henry noted that the Mercury cited Stevenage as a hotspot location, which is misleading. The terminology used needs to be clearly defined as the public are interested and misleading information can raise the fear of crime. The Commissioner agreed and advised that the HALO campaign (operation about child sexual exploitation) had captured the highest number of referrals from the Stevenage area, whereas the highest amount of crime was in Watford. The high number of referrals in Stevenage can be partly attributed to the 'say if it if you see it' campaign in this area.

Cllr Ruffles explained how Cllr Cowan recently reported an anti-social behaviour incident, but he was asked so many questions by the police it delayed the response to the incident. The Commissioner confirmed he was aware of Cllr Cowan's case and forwarded his email to the Deputy Chief Constable. The response stated it was mandatory for certain incidents, including anti-social behaviour, that the caller is asked additional questions so vulnerable or repeat victims are identified. Many callers do not automatically give the key details. The number of anti-social behaviour reports in Hertfordshire decreased by 30 per cent last year.

The Chairman noted that it was the Commissioner's duty to hold the Chief Constable to account and individual complaints are not part of that remit. Cllr Cowan was better placed to make an individual complaint to the police.

Cllr Bedford observed that when she called 101 to report callers to her home, she was taken through a long procedure, which meant by the time the police arrived the callers had gone. The Commissioner advised that the control room is currently under review and the police need to reflect on public expectations. The 101 service is to report something that has already happened or a matter the public think the police should know about, whereas 999 should be called if an incident is in progress. Cllr Bedford suggested that the police should change their guidance issued to the public, as she was under the impression that non-emergencies, which this report was, should be reported via 101. Cllr McNally supported Cllr Bedford's comments as the public are told to call 999 only in an emergency. The police do not distinguish between urgent and important.

5 PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

No questions from the public.

6 QUESTIONS TO THE PANEL AND PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

No questions or petitions from the public.

7 VICTIM SERVICES COMMISSIONING

The Commissioner introduced the report on commissioning services for victims. A multi-agency co-located Victim Care Centre (Beacon) based in Welwyn Garden City will be launched on 27 March 2015. The existing police system is set up around criminals and the victims can sometimes be forgotten. The victim surcharge is used to fund services for victims, which totals £1.2 million in Hertfordshire. A conference on restorative justice was held at the University of Hertfordshire on 23 March 2015. The Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse charity (now known as SafeLives) has produced a review of the countywide domestic abuse framework and the provision of services, which is available at: http://www.hertscommissioner.org/fluidcms/files/files/caada_review_06015_hertfordshire.pdf.

Mr Jones asked if there was any trend data from the Victims Voice survey. The Commissioner advised there was, which is why the survey will remain open indefinitely.

Cllr Bedford queried whether there was any prioritisation in terms of how quickly victims receive support, as anecdotal evidence suggests services from Victim Support are provided as quickly as services from the police. The Commissioner advised that different people want different support and it was right that support is provided to victims who do not report crimes. The average victim is male, white and aged between 16 and 25. This demographic generally requires different support when compared to other groups of people.

Cllr Bedford noted that it is sometimes difficult to end conversations with Victim Support. Cllr Ruffles advised he has volunteered at Victim Support and this can be resolved with appropriate training. However, there is a balance as often people who say no to support initially do want support at a later date.

8 THE WORK PLAN OF THE PANEL

The Chairman advised that he met with the Commissioner prior to the meeting to discuss possible topics for the Panel's work plan, including volunteering, victim support, crime statistics and reporting, and monitoring the progress of collaborations with other police forces. There will be an item on the next agenda to consider the future work plan.

Cllr Henry asked as part of the scrutiny role whether other speakers can be invited to meetings. The Chairman advised that three of four members will volunteer to scrutinise each topic, they will meet with the Commissioner's office and then make recommendations to the Panel.

9 **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PANEL**

The Chairman introduced the annual report. A wider programme of work in 2015/16 will enable next year's report to be more interesting. Cllr Bedford suggested that all the local authorities in Hertfordshire, including the parish and town councils, are asked to display a link to the report on their websites and also to display a poster on their notice boards.

The Chairman noted the lack of members of the public at the meeting and more needs to be done to attract attendees. Cllr Bedford suggested that future meetings could be held in community halls, rather than town halls. Dr Ramsay suggested that local papers need to be told about meetings well in advance of the date of the meeting.

10 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

(a) **Changes to the terms and conditions of the Commissioner's existing Chief Finance Officer**

The Commissioner advised it is proposed that Mr John Franklin will remain as the Commissioner's Chief Finance Officer for 2015/16. The appointment has worked well and Mr Franklin's insight and scrutiny has led to a change in the treasury management function which resulted in an increased return in the region of £75,000 of additional interest on balances over and above budget.

11 **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

7pm, Thursday 11 June 2015 – Stevenage Borough Council