



HERTFORDSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

MAIN MEETING

Thursday 12 November 2015
Dacorum Borough Council

MINUTES

Present

Cllr T Hutchings, Broxbourne Borough Council (Chairman)
Cllr Ms S Batson, Stevenage Borough Council
Cllr P Choudhury, Hertsmere Borough Council
Cllr A Franey, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
Cllr Ms I Imarni, Dacorum Borough Council
Mr B Jones, Co-opted member
Mr I Laidlaw-Dickson, Co-opted member
Dr M Ramsay, Co-opted member
Cty Cllr P Ruffles, Hertfordshire County Council
Cllr A Scarth, Three Rivers District 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 N Villa, PCC Deputy Chief Executive
Mr M Collier, PCC Acting Chief Finance Officer
Dr A Birkamshaw, PCC Head of Policy and Engagement
Mr A Bowden, member of the public

1 INTRODUCTIONS, APOLOGIES AND WELCOME

Apologies

Cllr Mrs A Brewster, St Albans City and District Council
Cllr T Hunter, North Hertfordshire District Council
Cllr R Martins, Watford Borough Council
Cllr P Phillips, East Herts District Council
Dr M Verlot, Co-opted member
Cllr S Gaygusuz (substitute), St Albans City and District Council
Cllr M Haley (substitute), Watford Borough Council
Mr D Gibson, Deputy PCC

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 11 JUNE 2015

Cllr Ruffles asked that page four is amended to acknowledge that the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner does attend Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel meetings, although he was not present at this specific meeting.

The minutes of the meeting were agreed.

3 MATTERS ARISING

The Chairman advised that he will be attending a trial network meeting of police and crime panels in the eastern region on 27 November 2015. Other police and crime panels invited include Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire. Attendees will include chairmen, clerks and up to one other member from each panel. Mr Laidlaw-Dickson, as the lead for the working group monitoring the progress of force collaboration, will be invited to future meetings.

Dr Ramsay noted that he and Cllr Ruffles attended the last Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Panel meeting on 4 November 2015, which was the first meeting after the new Chief Constable had been appointed in September 2015. There are lessons to be learnt from the short advertising period, as three people requested the application form and only one person applied for the position. An internal appointment was made. Cllr Ruffles advised that it was a lively meeting, well attended and focused on cyber-crime and violent crime. Overall, it was a worthwhile visit. Dr Ramsay noted Cambridgeshire is in a similar position to Hertfordshire, as the finances are in a good position but savings still need to be found. The Chairman welcomed members attending the meetings of other panels.

4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

Mr Bowden asked whether the Commissioner considered himself bound by the national code of ethics and what should happen if this is broken. The Commissioner advised the answer was yes and that he abides by the code of ethics and, if this is broken, he will be held to account by the Panel and the electorate.

Mr Bowden stated that between 2010 and 2014 more than 47,500 calls to the telephone number 101 were not answered and the Commissioner has not commented about this. Mr Bowden asked whether it is important for the

Commissioner to hold the Chief Constable to account about this matter and what the outcome has been. The Commissioner advised that he has been open about targets related to answering 101 and 999 telephone calls. It is important to ensure the force control room is more efficient. A more robust system will be available once the Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire control rooms are combined. The reasons as to why 101 call targets were not met during this period can be attributed to software issues, staff on leave and staff sickness. A larger force control room will provide greater resilience to these pressures.

5 **QUESTIONS TO THE PANEL AND PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

Mr Bowden asked why there was a delay in publishing the minutes of the Panel's last meeting. The Chairman advised that this was an error.

6 **UPDATE FROM THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER**

The Commissioner introduced the update report. There are further developments to report regarding the strategic alliance collaboration, as final agreements for public contract are due to be signed shortly and will be published on the Commissioner's website. The Government's spending review is imminent and there will be challenges for every police force. In partnership with Hertfordshire County Council, the Commissioner's office will use the Strategic Road Safety Partnership to manage and administer the Road Safety Fund. The Commissioner's office receives many emails about localised speeding and the Road Safety Fund can be used to change the habits of drivers. This will include installing average speed cameras on the A10, which have proven effective on motorways, and education and campaigns, such as don't drink and drive.

The Commissioner advised that since June this year, progress has been made to support Hertfordshire's Mental Health Crisis Care Concordat with a range of partners and through a multi-agency action plan. The Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel still requires more members and this is being raised at public meetings so there is a greater representation across the different demographics. A new countywide Business Crime Strategy has been launched, which sets out how business crime will be tackled.

The Commissioner advised that Beacon has been a success for providing support to victims. In particular, data shows that between April and September 2015 there were 7,205 calls from priority group victims responded to and 2,965 visits to the Beacon website. Restorative Justice week takes place between 16 and 22 November 2015.

Mr Laidlaw-Dickson welcomed the informative discussion held at the Panel's recent training day and asked how there is accountability for police and crime commissioners and chief constables in areas where collaboration is taking place. The Commissioner advised that even though services may be delivered by other police forces, Hertfordshire's Chief Constable should still be held to account for the delivery of these services. Joint boards will interrogate the lead officer for collaborative work streams.

Cllr Ruffles expressed concerns that the Commissioner's report states there is "little knowledge amongst police around mental health and there is a need for more training". It is commendable to acknowledge weaknesses but with the high number of people in custody who have mental health issues it is important this is followed up. The Commissioner agreed and 'soft' areas are difficult to get right. The police do have experience of mental health as 40 per cent of people in custody have mental health issues and a psychiatric nurse is located in the force control room during the night.

Cllr Ruffles welcomed the involvement of the University of Hertfordshire and the fact an academic approach to restorative justice has been adopted. The timing of the community remedy, where a victim would like an apology in person from the offender, is essential, taking into account both the victim and the offender. The Commissioner acknowledged the community remedy is not easy but it can make a difference.

The Chairman asked how the Commissioner avoided crossing the line between the police and the courts. The Commissioner advised that the criminal justice system has traditionally viewed crimes as being against the state rather than the individual. There is an academic debate to put the victim at the heart of the criminal justice system and this is what restorative justice does.

Cllr Batson noted the dip sample methodology used by the Stop and Search Panel does not show the differences in proportionality and it is not a scientific approach. Dr Ramsay suggested sampling different times of day and an informal approach is at least a start at scrutinising stop and search.

7 **ANNUAL REPORTS – INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITORS AND DOG VISITING SCHEMES**

The Commissioner introduced the annual report of the independent custody visitor scheme. It is important to ensure that people who are deprived of liberty are properly looked after. As at March 2015, there were 55 independent custody volunteers but 70 per cent were over 60 years old and 72 per cent had been volunteers for over 10 years. This meant that the volunteers did not reflect the demographics of who is being arrested and the volunteers were also friendly with the custody sergeants. Turnover of volunteers is positive and 19 new independent custody volunteers have been appointed.

The Commissioner introduced the annual report of the dog visit scheme. There are four volunteers who are trained by the Dog Trusts and undertake visits to all police dogs on a regular basis.

Cllr Batson asked whether the independent custody visitors are shown on the front cover of the annual report. The Commissioner advised that volunteers generally do not want their photo taken and included in such documents.

Cllr Scarth asked how long it takes a van with a police dog to arrive once this resource is requested. The Commissioner advised that this is determined by where the van is located. This is generally not an issue because the requirement for police dogs is often prearranged, such as drug raids. Resources are spread across Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire.

Cllr Ruffles noted the reference made on page six in the report to the unannounced visit by Her Majesty's Inspectorates of Prisons and Constabularies in May 2015 and asked whether there were any learning points. The Commissioner advised this can be tabled at the Panel's next meeting.

Cllr Choudhury queried what action is taken to ensure the independent custody volunteers visit at different times and days. The Commissioner advised that staff from the Commissioner's office prepare the timetable for visits and the police are not told about the scheduling. The police sometimes recommend that the independent custody volunteers should not go in for their own safety and the Commissioner's office monitors this to ensure it does not happen often.

Cllr Imarni noted that the independent custody visitor scheme annual report states 25 per cent of the issues independent custody volunteers raised were medical or mental health related. The Commissioner recognised that this is a key issue and it is important to work with the Health and Wellbeing Board and to keep visiting prisons and custody suites.

8 REVIEW UPDATES

Victim support

Cllr Batson noted that Beacon was well run and suggested that Mr Kevin McGettrick was invited to the Panel's next meeting to give a short presentation about Beacon.

The Chairman asked how people are referred to Beacon. Cllr Batson advised that the police pass information to Beacon and anyone can refer anyone who they deem may need help, which includes victims referring themselves.

Statistics

Dr Ramsay queried whether other members wished to participate in the statistics working group. The Chairman and Mr Laidlaw-Dickson volunteered to join the statistics working group.

Cllr Scarth welcomed the use of pie charts with numbers in the independent custody visitor scheme annual report, as percentages can be misleading. Dr Ramsay advised that percentages should always be backed up with a number.

Force collaboration

Mr Laidlaw-Dickson suggested it would be helpful to meet with Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire police and crime panels to discuss force collaboration. The Chairman agreed and will raise it at the trial network meeting of police and crime panels in the eastern region on 27 November 2015.

9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman advised that the Committee on Standards in Public Life published the report 'tone from the top – leadership, ethics and accountability in policing' in

June 2015. The report followed an eight month inquiry which considered whether the accountability model for local policing was effective in supporting and promoting high ethical standards. It made two recommendations for police and crime panels. Firstly, police and crime panels should review the police and crime commissioner's annual report in public session, attended by the commissioner, as part of their annual scrutiny programme and make any recommendations as appropriate. Secondly, police and crime panels should publish a forward plan of decisions and a work plan. It is considered that the Panel already follows both recommendations.

Mr Laidlaw-Dickson queried whether any assessment had been made about what impact the Government's spending review would have on policing in Hertfordshire. The Commissioner confirmed that until the spending review is published there is a wide variation as to what the outcome may be. It is assumed there will be between 25 and 40 per cent reduction in grant funding over the next five years. Hertfordshire has a good reserve position. Further collaboration with other police forces will be required to reduce overall expenditure.

Cllr Scarth welcomed the short presentation that is being delivered by 'Learn2Live' in schools about road safety and encouraged members to contact local schools to find out whether they had received the talk.

Cllr Scarth noted the positive impact of OWL, the communication system for neighbourhood watch, which can send messages to thousands of people at once. It was suggested members should encourage residents to sign up to OWL. Cllr Batson agreed more people should be encouraged to be involved in neighbourhood watch and suggested this could be a future agenda item for the Panel to consider. The Chairman advised an item on neighbourhood watch will be included as part of the Panel's forward plan.

Cllr Batson raised concerns that she was aware a local neighbourhood watch coordinator was not known by the force control room. The Commissioner agreed neighbourhood watch was a helpful scheme and in this particular case it was a control room issue rather than an issue with how neighbourhood watch is set up.

10 **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

Thursday 28 January 2016 – meeting to be held at East Herts District Council

The meeting scheduled on Thursday 11 February 2016 may be moved to Thursday 17 March 2016 if a further meeting to conclude the scrutiny of the Commissioner's proposed budget and precept is not required.