



HERTFORDSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

MAIN MEETING

Thursday 28 January 2016
East Herts District Council

MINUTES

Present

Cllr T Hutchings, Broxbourne Borough Council (Chairman)
Cllr P Choudhury, Hertsmere Borough Council
Cllr A Franey, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
Cllr M Haley (substitute), Watford Borough Council
Cllr Ms I Imarni, Dacorum Borough Council
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
Mr D Gibson, Deputy PCC
Ms N Villa, PCC Deputy Chief Executive
Mr M Collier, PCC Chief Finance Officer
Mr K McGetrick, PCC Head of Victims Commissioning
Dr A Birkamshaw, PCC Head of Policy and Engagement
Cllr Ms L Haysey, Leader of East Herts District Council
Mr B Simmonds, East Herts Head of Community Safety and Health Services
Mr A Bowden, member of the public

1 INTRODUCTIONS, APOLOGIES AND WELCOME

Apologies

Cllr Ms S Batson, Stevenage Borough Council
Cllr Mrs A Brewster, St Albans City and District Council
Cllr T Hunter, North Hertfordshire District Council
Mr B Jones, Co-opted member
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 J McNally (substitute), North Hertfordshire District Council

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF 12 NOVEMBER 2015

Mr Bowden clarified that on page two it was between 2010 and 2014 more than 47,500 calls to the telephone number 101 were not answered.

The Chairman advised that the response to item five on page three was correctly recorded.

Cllr Ruffles asked whether there was any further information about the unannounced visit by Her Majesty's Inspectorates of Prisons and Constabularies in May 2015 referred to in the first paragraph on page five. The Commissioner confirmed this could be circulated with the minutes of the meeting.

Cllr Ruffles clarified that in part eight in the second paragraph on page five victims can also refer themselves to Beacon.

The Chairman advised the meeting date Thursday 27 March 2016 on page six was an error and should instead be Thursday 17 March 2016.

The minutes of the meeting were agreed.

3 MATTERS ARISING

Cllr Ruffles noted that he had attended the Essex Police and Crime Panel meeting held on 26 November 2015.

The Chairman advised that he and the Clerk had attended the Police and Crime Panel Eastern Region Network meeting held on 27 November 2015. The Panel has paid £500 to Frontline Consulting who will arrange three meetings a year. The next meeting will be held on 1 March 2016.

4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

No questions.

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

No questions.

6 **COMPLAINT RAISED ABOUT THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER**

The Chairman advised that a subgroup will be formed to review the complaint raised about the Commissioner and report back to the Panel.

7 **BEACON PRESENTATION (SERVICE FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME IN HERTFORDSHIRE)**

Mr McGetrick gave a presentation about the Hertfordshire victim care centre called Beacon.

Mr Bowden asked whether the figures showed a trend of increased month by month usage of Beacon. Mr McGetrick advised that this was not the case, but there is a consistent stream of victims using the service.

Cllr Ruffles noted that a long time ago he was told that around a third of all victims of crime had at one time been a perpetrator of crime. Cllr Ruffles asked whether Beacon welcomed all victims, including victims that were once a perpetrator of crime. Mr McGetrick advised that each person is dealt with professionally regardless of their background.

The Chairman advised that the Panel's role is to scrutinise the Commissioner and, as significant amounts of money is being spent on victim support, asked how value for money would be achieved. Mr McGetrick advised that the current cost to provide a person with support is £7.80 per victim, which is money well spent. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary previously highlighted that the Constabulary once did not provide support to victims consistently or in a timely manner, whereas now once a significant event occurs the victims servicing team will contact victims.

Dr Ramsay noted that Mr McGetrick has a specialist team and asked what relationship this team has with front line officers. Mr McGetrick advised that front line officers can refer victims to Beacon or tell victims about the services provided by Beacon. Dr Ramsay asked whether front line officers are absolved of responsibility. Mr McGetrick advised that this was not necessarily the case as the victim personal statement was the trigger.

Cllr Scarth queried if a Hertfordshire resident was a victim of crime in the Metropolitan Police area whether this would be outside the scope of Beacon. Mr McGetrick advised that there was no collective agreement in place but Beacon would contact the Metropolitan Police. Cases can last for many years so the case will follow the victim if the victim moves around the country.

8 REVIEW UPDATES

Victim support

The Chairman thanked Mr McGetrick for his presentation.

Statistics

Dr Ramsay gave an update on how the Panel can help the Commissioner and the Constabulary to improve or fine tune performance measurement. The Commissioner's annual report for 2014-15 states that, "crime increased by 10.6 per cent last year". It is unclear as to whether crime is increasing or decreasing, as the increase was "mainly attributable to improved crime recording". This topic will be explored further in partnership with the Commissioner and the Constabulary, taking into account advice from the Office of National Statistics. Both reported crime and the Crime Survey for England and Wales will be considered. The Commissioner welcomed Dr Ramsay's experience and the Panel's work.

Force collaboration

The Chairman advised that an update will be provided to the Panel later in the year.

9 THE PROPOSED POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER'S PRECEPT

The Commissioner introduced his proposed precept, which is to reduce the Band D council tax precept for policing by 0.55 per cent to a figure of £147. There may be some confusion as to why policing is able to reduce the precept but local government is not able to. In November 2015 it was expected that grant funding from the Home Office would be reduced by 15 to 40 per cent, but following the Government's spending review it was confirmed that the policing budget would be protected in real terms until 2019/20. The efficiencies still need to be delivered but there is more income than initially planned for.

The Commissioner advised that reserves stand at £48.3 million, which equates to 25 per cent of turnover. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) recommend that the level of reserves stand at three per cent of turnover, which would be £6 million. There is a four year plan to reduce the reserves closer to the level recommended by CIPFA, as there is a risk the Treasury could claim these funds.

The Commissioner advised that Hertfordshire could raise the Band D council tax precept by £5. This is not necessary due to historically sound financial management. The rationale to the precept change is that the public only pay what they have to for policing.

Cllr Scarth queried whether reserves are being used to reduce the precept level. The Commissioner advised that reserves are being used because if they are not the Government will remove these funds. However, income from council tax will increase next year, despite the 0.55 per cent precept reduction equating to £0.346 million, due to annual growth in the tax base of circa 1.5 per cent, which is equivalent to £0.944 million.

Mr Bowden asked what the purpose is of reducing council tax by £0.346 million when reserves stand at £48.3 million. The Commissioner advised that this is a modest decrease because if the precept is decreased too far there is no scope to raise sufficient funds in future years. The public will not notice a difference as policing comprises circa 10 per cent of the council tax charge. The reserves will also be used to invest, such as the control room.

Mr Bowden asked whether by giving the taxpayer 82p over a 12 month period it still leaves the Treasury scope to take the funds. The Commissioner advised that the Treasury could change local government financing at any moment. Reserves need to be earmarked for specific purposes. Mr Bowden asked whether this decision was a political statement. The Commissioner advised he has been elected as a politician so it is political.

Cllr Haley noted that Watford is the largest urban area in the county and asked what the long term strategic view of the custody suite in Watford is. The Commissioner advised that this was an operational decision. The Chief Constable would say that the current custody suite is not safe, as people need to go down stairs to access it, and there is not a large demand for the facility. The Commissioner holds the Chief Constable to account in terms of officer time travelling from Hatfield and the impact on vulnerable people.

Cllr Imarni welcomed the decision to make efficiencies a priority and that there will be more police staff from 1 April 2016. Cllr Imarni asked what the plans are for 999 and 101 services. The Commissioner advised that there are plans to combine the force control room with Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire.

Cllr Scarth noted that the fragile state of some people taken to the Hatfield custody suite should be taken into account, which would not be possible if there is only one police officer in the vehicle. Cllr Scarth asked whether improvements to Watford police station are reliant on district council funding. The Commissioner advised that it is right to have a distinction between operations and strategic plans. The experts know how to accompany prisoners but it is quite right to keep an open mind.

Cllr Ruffles expressed disappointment that there was not more emphasis on neighbourhood and front line policing in the Commissioner's report. Cllr Ruffles asked for reassurance that neighbourhood policing was still a key component of future strategic plans. The Commissioner advised that neighbourhood policing has been a key theme during the last four years and will continue to be. There is a Chief Inspector and neighbourhood policing team in each borough. There will be investment in 138 new officers over the next year. Although the overall staffing numbers in the Constabulary are decreasing, there is more emphasis on the front line, such as neighbourhood policing, cyber-crime and child sexual exploitation. There will be continued funding for police community support officers.

Mr Laidlaw-Dickson noted that around 30 per cent of the budget will be spent on collaboration. There are risks attached to this, including financial and particularly in providing credible contact arrangements. Mr Laidlaw-Dickson suggested it would have been better to freeze the precept and spend the additional money on extra staff in the control room to improve the answering performance and provide a better service. The Commissioner advised that overall there will be an increase in council tax income due to the increase in the tax base. There are some concerns

about 999 and 101 call handling but the control room savings will not be realised until this service is right. The three police and crime commissioners for Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire are working together. The public want neighbourhood policing retained, which includes a police station in each borough. A custody facility is a specialist service and is not a police station. The measure of local policing is the amount of front line police in each borough.

Cllr Choudhury asked on how many occasions the Treasury has taken reserves, as local authorities use their reserves to generate an income. The Commissioner advised that cash reserves do not generate much income, as the rate of return is 0.45 per cent. The police estate can be used to generate an income flow, which will be more useful in future years. The Home Office and Treasury have been told what the reserves will be used for. At one point schools had large reserves and needed to explain what the reserves would be used for.

The Chairman summarised the discussion and that the proposed precept and budget makes sense. There was no suggestion by members of the Panel for the precept to be increased and there are sufficient reserves available if circumstances change.

The Panel agreed to support the Commissioner's proposal to reduce the Band D council tax precept for policing by 0.55 per cent to a figure of £147.

10 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chairman advised that the meeting scheduled on Thursday 16 June 2016 will be brought forwards to Thursday 26 May 2016. This both allows sufficient time for district councils to nominate their Panel represent and enables the Panel to meet the Commissioner at an earlier date following the police and crime commissioner election in May 2016.

11 **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

Thursday 17 March 2016 – meeting to be held at Watford Borough Council's offices