



HERTFORDSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

Thursday 13 February 2014
St Albans City and District Council

MINUTES

Present

Cllr R Hannam, Broxbourne Borough Council (Chairman)
Cllr M Alexander, East Herts District Council
Cllr Ms S Bedford, Three Rivers District Council
Cllr A Franey Welwyn Hatfield District Council
Cllr S Gaygusuz (substitute), St Albans City and District Council
Cllr N Harden, Dacorum Borough Council
Mr I Laidlaw-Dickson, Co-opted member
Cllr R Martins (substitute), Watford Borough Council
Cty Cllr P Ruffles, Hertfordshire County Council

Also Present

Cllr K Brown, Broxbourne Borough Council
Mr G Miles, Broxbourne Borough Council
Mr J Stack, Broxbourne Borough Council
Mr T Hewins, Broxbourne Borough Council
Mr D Lloyd, Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)
Mr D Gibson, Deputy PCC
Mr R Wilsher, PCC Chief Executive
Temporary Deputy Chief Constable Roome-Gifford, Hertfordshire Constabulary
Superintendent Sargent, Hertfordshire Constabulary
Mr S Nagler, Chairman of the PCC Audit Committee

5 members of the public attended.

1 INTRODUCTIONS, APOLOGIES AND WELCOME

Introductions

Councillor Keith Brown, newly appointed substitute member for Broxbourne Borough Council, attended his first meeting. The Temporary Deputy Chief Constable and Superintendent Sargent were attending for item 7 on the agenda so it was proposed to take that item first.

Apologies

Cllr Mrs A Brewster, St Albans City and District Council
Cllr M Bright, Hertsmere Borough Council
Cllr C Goldstein, Hertsmere Borough Council
Cllr T Hunter, North Hertfordshire District Council
Cllr Ms Needham, North Hertfordshire District Council
Cllr D Scudder, Watford Borough Council
Cllr Ms S Taylor, Stevenage Borough Council
Dr M Verlot, Co-opted member
Ms D Currie, Deputy PCC Chief Executive
Mr J Bugg, Office of the PCC

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 23 JANUARY 2014

The minutes of the meeting were agreed.

3 MATTERS ARISING

Mr Miles advised that the Panel has sent its report to the Commissioner to confirm in writing its support of the proposed precept. The Commissioner has responded back in acknowledgement.

4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

Cllr Walkington asked whether the website, www.commissioner.org, included in the Commissioner's transparency report is correct. The Commissioner advised that there was an error in the report and the correct website is www.hertscommissioner.org.

5 PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO THE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

None

6 TRANSPARENCY REPORT OF THE PCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Mr Miles explained that the Panel received a report in July 2013, following the work undertaken by the Home Affairs Committee, as not all of the statutory data had been published by the Commissioner. Some information was still not available in November 2013 so the Panel asked for a further report.

Mr Wilsher advised that the Commissioner's website will be updated so content is easier to find. The Commissioner's response to the Panel's report on the proposed

precept (item 3.b.v) has been added to the website so this item is now coded green in the annex. Item 3.e.c3 (collaboration agreements) is coded red because the data is in different places and it is difficult to find. As part of the review of the website, a link will be added to the homepage so it is easier to find this information. Item 5.d.d4 (decisions made at the Commissioner's formal governance meetings) is now green as the report was published since the circulation of the Panel's meeting papers. Item 1.e.f2 (list of freedom of information requests received) is not a statutory requirement but is considered best practice to publish. Item 7 will be coded green once reports are provided by the district community safety partnerships.

Cllr Harden noted that item 2.b is duplicated and asked if there was a reason why this was the case. Mr Wilsher advised he would have to check.

Cllr Bedford reaffirmed it was difficult to find the information on the Commissioner's website and suggested a drop down menu on the left hand side for transparency purposes would enable people to find the information. Cllr Bedford pointed out that it would be appropriate to change the name of the webpage called 'what we spend' to 'what other people spend'. The Commissioner advised that his office is small and, as with any new organisation, it takes time but the content will be right eventually.

Cllr Bedford suggested it was important to ensure that the statutory requirements are in place first and as time was taken to establish a blog for the Commissioner the statutory functions should be in place. There is nothing worse than conspiracy theories if the information is hidden. The Commissioner advised that there is no exhaustive list of what information needs to be published as a statutory requirement. It would be helpful if the Home Office did publish such a list. It is best practice to publish certain items listed, rather than a statutory duty.

Cllr Harden suggested the transposition of annex A (statutory transparency review) onto the website would suffice. Mr Wilsher confirmed this would be adequate.

Cllr Martins noted there is a diverse community in Hertfordshire and asked whether the Commissioner has processes in place to change the staff mix in his office. There is currently no member of staff from ethnic minorities or with disabilities and 10 of 12 are white British. The Commissioner advised that the ideal outcome is to have a diverse workforce in terms of gender, sexuality, ethnicity and age. However, with a small office it is difficult to have this balance, particularly when only a certain type of person applies for a job. For instance, when the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner position was advertised, the majority of applicants were white males. Mr Wilsher leads on diversity at Hertfordshire County Council and it is more important to focus on the Constabulary's recruitment processes.

7 POLICE CRIME DATA REPORT OF THE PCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Mr Miles explained that at the Panel's November 2013 meeting the Commissioner's report on progress with the Police and Crime Plan, which included statistics from the Constabulary, coincided with wider public concerns on the reporting of crime statistics. The Commissioner asked the Chief Constable to review the integrity of crime statistics reported by the Constabulary.

The Deputy Chief Constable introduced the report on police crime data. There has been national media coverage on crime recording and a general lack of public confidence in police data. In Hertfordshire, there may be issues with the interpretation of certain crime types, such as rape, but there is not an issue with corrupted data. It is important that the public have trust in the data published. The correct classification of crimes ensures that victims receive the service required and the right analysis is undertaken by the Constabulary to tackle crime and disorder.

The Deputy Chief Constable noted that the Commissioner has challenged the Constabulary on its areas of vulnerability. Although the crime statistics in Hertfordshire are positive and crime is reducing, crimes such as rape are below the national average, which is not necessarily good news if people are not reporting these crimes. There is no achievement in crime reduction if it is not based on people's confidence in reporting crime and the criminal justice system. If a certain type of crime increases, it is helpful intelligence for the Constabulary as resources can be allocated accordingly.

The Deputy Chief Constable advised that the crime recording process is complex and is compliant with the Home Office Counting Rules and the National Crime Recording Standards. There is robust supervision of crimes reported into the Force Communications Room. Crimes are correctly classified within 72 hours and allocated for further investigation as appropriate. Internal audits are reported on a monthly basis to senior officers and external audits are undertaken by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary. The next external audit is expected to be undertaken in March 2014. A paper will be reported to the Commissioner's Strategic Executive Board on the current position, including areas of vulnerability.

Mr Laidlaw-Dickson noted that the rape statistics include a high number of 'no crimes' when compared to other areas of the country. Mr Laidlaw-Dickson queried whether this trend was also apparent for other crimes and, if so, asked whether this meant crimes are not recorded correctly.

The Commissioner acknowledged that he has the same concerns. However, there are a variety of reasons why a report may be classified as a 'no crime'. For instance, the Constabulary has an agreement with petrol stations where the default action is to record instances where customers leave without paying as a 'no crime'. The definition of what is and what is not a crime is complex, as there has to be the intention of committing the crime by the perpetrator. The definitions of whether certain actions are a crime do change from time to time when the Home Office makes alterations to the counting rules regarding certain types of crime. It could have been claimed that crime in Hertfordshire has decreased further using recent changes by the Home Office. It is unhelpful when the media claim that the Police never report crime, as there are robust processes in place. There are many reasons why the rape statistics are an outlier. A main focus of the Police and Crime Plan has been an emphasis on domestic violence.

The Deputy Chief Constable advised that the Constabulary searches for exceptional 'no crime' reports and Hertfordshire is not an outlier in terms of overall 'no crime' reports. Only the dedicated decision makers can convert a crime to a 'no crime'. The rape data suggests that the Constabulary has strong and robust processes in place. The dedicated decision makers consider all the evidence and determine what the data means. For example, the following is considered: is there

low recording; is the classification of 'no crime' correct; is the detection rate sound; and is the conviction rate sound. An entire audit of rape and sexual offence reports is being undertaken and will be reported to the Commissioner on 24 February 2014.

Mr Laidlaw-Dickson asked whether a domestic violence report which is retracted is still considered a crime. The Deputy Chief Constable confirmed it is recorded as a crime and it is not necessary to have a physical victim or co-operation from the victim for a crime to be recorded. On occasions in the past this has caused confusion for staff and a 'no crime' has been recorded. The guidance from the Home Office states that this is a crime. It is important for the Constabulary to consider situations that are in the margins and know the force's weaknesses.

Cllr Alexander suggested crime statistics can be misleading if percentages are considered in isolation from raw numbers, as an increase in a particular crime category from one to two is a 100% increase. The Deputy Chief Constable confirmed that the Constabulary does focus on individual numbers and they are openly available for anyone, including insurance firms.

Cllr Martins asked whether the Police arriving on scene and categorising an incident as a domestic incident rather than domestic violence is a 'dangerous road to go down'. The Deputy Chief Constable indicated the Constabulary has worked hard on domestic abuse and hoped these situations no longer occur. Staff are clear on how to categorise crime. These types of incident are often referred onto other agencies. An audit by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary from two months ago showed compliance in this area was strong. The Commissioner emphasised the importance of multi agency work as often incidents are reported via other channels, such as to housing associations. The victim may not want the Police or social services involved and people report to agencies they least fear.

Cllr Harden stated he could not fault the process but questioned the difference between a crime and 'no crime' incident. Cllr Harden cited an example of road rage when the operator was reluctant to log the incident as it was considered a 'no crime'. The Deputy Chief Constable confirmed a public order incident is a crime and was not sure why it was not dealt with as a crime. The Commissioner noted the currency of the Police is crime and he will continue to ask questions and follow up unintended outcomes such as this, following meetings with the public. Customer focus is an important component of the Police and Crime Plan. The customer should be told what the Police are going to do in response to their report or receive an explanation as to why it is considered a 'no crime'. The Chairman suggested if there a several reports relating to the same person or vehicle it should be recorded as a crime. Cllr Harden noted these reports need to be logged so the information is there for the future.

Cllr Gaygusuz cited the example of sexual remarks or assault at work where people fear losing their job and asked whether there is a system for a friend of a victim to report the crime. The Deputy Chief Constable confirmed that there is a third party reporting system but that person will have to provide a statement and their identity. Prosecutions without a witness are rare and employment rights are there to protect the victim in these instances. Cllr Gaygusuz indicated in Turkey there is a 'silent' witness system. The Commissioner stated in the UK there is the right for the

person accused to defend themselves and there should be rights for both sides in a civilised society.

The Chairman requested that a report is submitted to the Panel's June meeting with the outcomes of the audit by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary. Cllr Alexander asked how Hertfordshire's crime recording process compares with neighbouring police forces. The Deputy Chief Constable advised that the audit by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary is a national inspection of all 43 forces and there will be a time delay before the work is published. However, a hot debrief will be held with the Constabulary following the audit which can form the basis of the report to the Panel's next meeting. Police forces record data differently and only Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary is able to compare different police forces.

8 **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PANEL**

Cllr Harden welcomed the report and considered it helpful so colleagues are aware of what the Panel does.

Cllr Alexander suggested the report should highlight where each meeting was held so people know meetings are held around the county.

9 **PROGRESS REPORT OF THE PCC**

The Commissioner introduced the report on progress with the Police and Crime Plan. Crime has reduced over the year to date, although the reduction is starting to level off. It is important to keep Hertfordshire as one of the safest places in the country. The public are fully aware of the initiatives developed. The offender pays idea has seen a significant amount of money taken away from criminals as part of the Proceeds of Crime Act. The driver awareness courses are working well. In October 2013 it was confirmed that the Commissioner's office will receive funding for victim support, which will be allocated to victim support organisations. The amount of turnover of the Commissioner's office will increase.

The Commissioner advised that there are normally two Panel meetings in January and February to consider the precept. The proposal to freeze the precept for the fourth successive year in Hertfordshire is unique in the country. It is important to use the policing assets as well as possible. This enables neighbourhood policing to be retained which is based on borough boundaries. This is the reason why better policing outcomes are achieved when compared with other areas of the country, as a police station and chief inspector are located in each borough. There will be slightly more police on the streets next year. Police community support officers have been safeguarded.

The Chairman welcomed the concise report.

Cllr Alexander noted the public focus is on flooding at the moment, which must place extra costs on the Police and other emergency services, and asked whether this expenditure could be claimed back from the Government. The Commissioner confirmed that the Constabulary are working at full capacity but generally in Hertfordshire there have not been the flooding problems experienced elsewhere in the country. Unless there are extraordinary circumstances, the extra expenditure is

paid for using existing budgets or reserves. The flooding will not adversely affect the policing budgets set. The policing budgets have to cope with all sorts of events, for example, events such as the Sonisphere concert.

Cllr Ruffles noted that an inspector in a rural area of the county recently accepted a gift. The Commissioner advised that the anonymous gift is an off road vehicle. The Police and Crime Plan focuses on the Police being open to sponsorship. The Commissioner will hold the Chief Constables to account to ensure abuse does not take place. The gift is welcomed as it is beneficial for local policing.

Cllr Gaygusuz asked for clarification on whether there would be more police on the streets during the next year. The Commissioner advised that the total number will be circa 100 police and circa 100 police community support officers, which would translate into a net gain of 10's of staff.

Cllr Harden stated that Mr Jonny Bugg will be missed, and asked what the implications are in the short term once he has departed the Commissioner's team and what processes are in place to recruit a replacement. The Commissioner agreed that Mr Jonny Bugg would be missed. The arrangement was always that he was on a two year placement from the Home Office so he could see what the Commissioner's office was like. Mr Bugg has created a good relationship between the Commissioner's office and the community safety partnerships and community safety managers and there is no reason why this should deteriorate. The recruitment process will be looked at.

10 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

None

11 **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

7pm, Thursday 19 June 2014 – venue to be determined