



HERTFORDSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

Thursday 29 January 2015
Hertsmere Borough Council

MINUTES

Present

Cllr T Hutchings, Broxbourne Borough Council (Chairman)
Cllr Mrs A Brewster, St Albans City and District Council
Cllr A Franey, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
Cllr C Goldstein, Hertsmere Borough Council
Cllr N Harden, Dacorum Borough Council
Cllr R Henry, Stevenage Borough Council
Mr B Jones, Co-opted member
Mr I Laidlaw-Dickson, Co-opted member
Cllr Ms K McLeod (substitute), Watford Borough Council
Dr M Ramsay, Co-opted member

Also Present

Mr G Miles, officer of the Police and Crime Panel
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 J Franklin, PCC Chief Financial Officer

4 members of the public attended.

1 INTRODUCTIONS, APOLOGIES AND WELCOME

Apologies

Cllr M Alexander, East Herts District Council
Cllr Ms S Bedford, Three Rivers District Council
Cllr S Gaygusuz, St Albans City and District Council
Cllr T Hunter, North Hertfordshire District Council
Cllr R Martins, Watford Borough Council
Cty Cllr P Ruffles, Hertfordshire County Council
Dr M Verlot, Co-opted member
Mr D Gibson, Deputy PCC
Ms D Currie, PCC Deputy Chief Executive

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 13 NOVEMBER 2014

The minutes of the meeting were agreed.

3 MATTERS ARISING

Mr Miles advised that he had contacted the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Panel and the Panel are invited to attend their precept meeting on Thursday 5 February 2015 or, alternatively, their meeting on 15 April 2015.

The Chairman noted that he had received a telephone call from the Local Government Association advising that they are undertaking a survey on police and crime panels and the results will be available in February 2015.

Mr Laidlaw-Dickson asked whether a response was issued by the Panel to the Committee on Standards in Public Life's consultation on accountability, leadership and ethics in local policing. Mr Miles advised that a response had been issued and a copy would be circulated to the Panel with the minutes of this meeting.

The Panel noted that the meeting originally scheduled on Thursday 18 June 2015 which the Commissioner could not attend, will now be held on Thursday 11 June 2015 when the Commissioner will introduce his update to his Plan.

4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

No questions from the public.

5 QUESTIONS TO THE PANEL AND PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

No questions or petitions from the public.

6 THE PROPOSED POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER'S PRECEPT

(a) Public questions on the proposed precept

No questions from the public.

(b) Panel consideration of the proposed precept

Mr Franklin introduced the Commissioner's 2015/16 precept and budget proposal. The report has been compiled in conjunction with the Constabulary's Chief Finance Officer. The district councils have confirmed their council tax base and collection fund information and there are no changes to the early estimates used for the budget report. The final finance settlement from the Government is expected to be confirmed on Wednesday 4 February 2015 and there are not expected to be any significant changes to the figures.

Mr Franklin advised that the Medium Term Financial Plan covers a four year period between 2015/16 and 2018/19. The net budget in 2015/16 will be £182 million, with 65 per cent funded from the Government grant and 35 per cent from council tax. The Government grant has been reduced by £5.8 million. Government grant funding projections after 2015/16 are based on national planning assumptions developed alongside the Home Office and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and reflect the need to plan for further grant reductions in line with the last spending review.

Mr Franklin highlighted that the budget includes pay awards in line with continued public sector pay restraints, including the recently announced 2.2 per cent increase for police staff from 1 March 2015 to 31 August 2016. A budget rebasing exercise has been carried out and an underspend of £2.7 million has been removed from the 2015/16 budget and it is anticipated that the level of underspend will decrease in future. From 2016 the Government will remove the employers' national insurance discount for those employees who have opted out of the Additional State Pension Scheme. It is estimated that the Constabulary will be faced with an increase of £2.9 million in its national insurance contributions.

Mr Franklin provided an update on the reserves position. A sum of £8 million will be used to support the budget and thereby smooth the savings path over the four year period. The level of general reserves for 2015/16 is £5.5 million, equivalent to three per cent of the net revenue budget, which takes into account the risks and uncertainties of budget estimates and is benchmarked against other authorities. A sum of £7 million has been allocated to the operational capability reserve, which will be used to support recruiting officer levels above the budgeted establishment over the medium term period.

Mr Franklin advised that the council tax freeze grant is estimated at £0.7 million for 2015/16. There is also additional precept income of £1.8 million from growth in the council tax base and collection fund. A sum of £1 million has been allocated towards reinvestment growth, which includes cybercrime and domestic violence.

Mr Franklin outlined that the savings programme totals £5.2 million in 2015/16, comprising £3.9 million of local savings and £1.3 million of collaborative savings. Around 70 per cent of local savings have already been delivered. There are some uncertainties and risks with the pace of savings, particularly the collaborative savings.

The Commissioner advised his proposal is to freeze the precept, which will mean there has been no increase since 2010. This can be achieved because the Constabulary is careful with how it spends money. There are sufficient reserves to

cover uncertainties. Such an extended precept freeze is unique in the country along with Staffordshire. An additional 150 officers will be recruited next year, with the impact being an estimated net increase of around 60 due to the retirement/resignation of some existing officers.

Mr Laidlaw-Dickson asked what analysis has been undertaken to ascertain the degree of risk of achieving collaborative savings, taking into the account the future financial viability of Bedfordshire Constabulary. Cllr Harden queried whether collaborative savings will be increasingly harder to achieve in future. Cllr McLeod asked how the savings are benchmarked.

The Commissioner advised that there is a risk in making collaborative savings with any partner, but there is a bigger risk if collaborative savings are not attempted as total spending between Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire constabularies is in the region of £500 million per annum. Although Bedfordshire Constabulary is in a different financial position and the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner has proposed to increase the precept by 16 per cent, Hertfordshire is in a position to pick and choose how to work with Bedfordshire for the benefit of residents in Hertfordshire. Control rooms will be explored next as it is less efficient to have three separate control rooms and there is greater resilience with more people in one control room. It is important to investigate all ways of making savings, including how the Constabulary can work with other agencies, such as Hertfordshire County Council, district councils and other constabularies. There is a red line and Hertfordshire will not work with neighbouring constabularies on a collaborative service if a saving cannot be delivered for the residents of Hertfordshire. The contingency reserve can be used if collaborate savings are not delivered as quickly as anticipated.

Cllr Goldstein suggested it was not appropriate to raise the precept level. The Commissioner agreed, particularly as the increase in the tax base has added £1.8 million which is considerably more than a moderate precept rise.

Mr Laidlaw-Dickson queried the proposal for a combined control room, as there are disparities and differences, such as despatches to incidents, and asked whether the three constabularies have agreed to the same approach. Mr Laidlaw-Dickson enquired how these issues are reconciled, although it probably is a similar approach to when local control rooms were amalgamated together as a county control room. The Commissioner recognised it was right to highlight the possible difficulties, but the public does not care where the control room is located as long as it does not impact on the response received. The measure is to have an appropriate service level agreement in place. Control rooms use electronic maps for despatches and it is not unknown for control rooms to be redirected to other parts of the country if support is needed, as technology allows a smooth transition. Changing service standards is not necessary, as shown by the banks, which all use the same call centres. As long as appropriate software is used, the despatch will not be affected, although it is important to ensure response times are not impacted. There is currently a channel shift taking place from phone calls to logging reports online.

Dr Ramsay noted that collaboration was crucial and not just in terms of finances, as police forces are not seen as outward looking. Dr Ramsay asked whether the additional officers will be police officers or police community support officers. The

Commissioner advised it would be additional police officers. Around £9 billion is spent by the public sector in Hertfordshire and the public want to see this spent efficiently.

Cllr Henry queried how exactly an additional 150 police officers translates into a net gain of 60 police officers and welcomed the sharing of back office functions between public bodies in Hertfordshire. The Commissioner explained there are funds available for an additional 150 police officers, but there will be a spike of retirements in 2017 which will result in a net gain of 60 police officers. Examples of collaborative working with public bodies include the allocation of community safety funds with district councils and sharing personnel with Hertfordshire County Council. Crime can more effectively be reduced by working collaboratively with partners.

Cllr Harden agreed that the location of the control room does not matter, as the issue is how quick calls are responded to and electronic map links between the control room and police cars will assist. Cllr Harden queried how the police can achieve channel shift considering the public are programmed to call 999 when there is an incident. The Commissioner explained the technology exists for linking the electronic maps and the Constabulary's IT systems which are being upgraded. The channel shift can be achieved because a substantial amount of people call 999 for updates on a previous crime reported, whereas a crime can be tracked via the Constabulary's website. For certain domestic violence incidents it may also be more convenient for the victim to report an incident via a text message or Twitter.

Cllr Brewster asked for the Commissioner to explain what virtual courts are. The Commissioner advised virtual courts enable the accused to be video linked or face timed to a magistrates court, which saves three police officers accompanying the accused, as this person is in a secure location. It also means victims are less likely to meet people they shouldn't. The accused has the same access to a lawyer.

Cllr Brewster raised concerns about the internet links in magistrates courts and whether they are set up for this technology. The Commissioner advised that funds are being spent on ensuring magistrates courts are set up for this technology but it will not be used in crown courts.

Mr Jones asked if the victim fund is sufficient. The Commissioner advised that when people are convicted the surcharge is now given to police and crime commissioners to spend on victim support. Hertfordshire will receive £1.2 million in Government grant in 2015/16 to help support the victims of crime.

Dr Ramsay asked how specific areas will be measured and compared with other police forces, such as cybercrime and domestic violence, and the Crime Survey for England and Wales can help. The Commissioner advised he will bring forward ideas at a future meeting for the Panel to view. The Chairman emphasised consistency is important.

The Panel agreed to support the Commissioner's proposal of a precept freeze.

7 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chairman advised that the Commissioner's advert for the Chief Executive position will be circulated to the Panel for comments by Saturday 7 February 2015.

The Chairman provided an update on future meeting dates. The meeting on Thursday 12 February is postponed due to the Panel agreeing with the Commissioner's precept proposal. A meeting will be arranged for Thursday 26 March 2015, which includes a special meeting to consider the position of the Commissioner's Chief Executive.

The Chairman advised that he and Mr Miles will meet shortly with the Commissioner and his Chief Executive to discuss the Panel's future work programme. An agenda item at the meeting on Thursday 26 March 2015 will be to talk through the ideas.

8 **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETINGS**

7pm, Thursday 26 March 2015 – venue to be confirmed