



WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL



MEETING OF THE HERTFORDSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

Tuesday 12 November 2020 – 7:36pm

Virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

(Please note the minutes are a brief summary of the discussion and not intended to be verbatim)

Members Present: Cllr S Monaghan (Chair), Broxbourne Borough Council
Cllr Isy Imarni (Vice Chair), Dacorum Borough Council
Cllr P Choudhury, Hertsmere Borough Council
Dr M Ramsay, Independent Member (Independent member)
Mr Ian Laidlaw-Dickson (Independent member)
Cllr J Hollywell, Stevenage Borough Council
Cllr C Woodward, Hertfordshire County Council
Cllr G Saffery, Watford Borough Council
Cllr A Curtis, East Herts District Council
Cllr S Hodgson, St Albans City and District Council
Cllr Scarth, Three Rivers District Council
Cllr Bernard Sarson - Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

Also Present: Mr David Lloyd, Police and Crime Commissioner
Mr David Gibson, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner
Mr Chris Brace, Chief Executive, PCC
Dr Amie Birkhamshaw, Director of Strategy, PCC
Mr Ian Rooney, Director of Finance, PCC
Chief Superintendent – Matthew Nicholls
Mrs N Boateng, Clerk to the Police and Crime Panel
Mr Stephen Billington, Broxbourne Borough Council
Mr John Hale

1. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed everyone to the Police and Crime Panel meeting.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr S North, North Hertfordshire District Council

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 11 August 2020

The minutes were agreed

4. MATTERS ARISING

At the last meeting under Item 13 (AOB) Cllr North raised a question regarding the environmental impact zero target. It was confirmed this would be saved as an agenda item for the future.

In addition, Cllr North raised a question regarding recent reports in the news alleging that female Police Officers and other female staff had been subjected to sexual harassment (lad culture) and wanted a report to be commissioned. DL pointed out this was operational but confirmed he would be speaking to the Chief Constable about it. Cllr Monaghan wanted to know whether there was any update and or whether any conversations had taken place. DL confirmed that conversations had taken place and this was an area of concern for him which is on his radar.

Cllr Woodward raised two matters from the previous minutes (1) the government provided some non ring fenced funding for the Police pension grant, could the Commissioner confirm that there will be sufficient funding for the pension scheme. (2) The HMICFRS Inspectorate report on child protection, which highlighted various short comings, the Commissioner confirmed he would come back at a later date on those short comings.

DL – there are 2 pensions schemes, the Police unfunded scheme which operates in a similar way to the fire service pension. The other scheme is for Police staff, which operates like the local government pension schemes. Part of our ongoing budget work is to ensure it is funded at the level it needs to be.

DL – There was a report in February regarding child protection, we brought this issue today to the Strategic Executive Board and were reassured by management actions that show us to be on track with the improvements that needed to be made.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO THE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

None received

6. QUESTIONS TO THE PANEL AND PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

A question was received from a member of the public which can be found at appendix A The Police and Crime Commissioner summarised his answer during the meeting, he also provided a written answer which can be found at appendix B

7. REPORT OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER – EMERGING ISSUES AND THE IMPACT OF COVID 19 ON HIS COMMUNITY SAFETY AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE PLAN-EVERYBODY’S BUSINESS AND EFFECTS ON THE DELIVERY PLAN

DL – Written report provided at appendix C.

DL- invited Chief Superintendent Matthew Nicholls, to give an overview of the challenges faced through Covid.

MN - The pandemic hit the UK in the early part of the year. In February a Strategic Coordinating Group was set up, with the fire service, those have been running through the pandemic. We have been policing by consent, giving advice and guidance to the public. In Hertfordshire, through the work of the group and Director of Public Health, we gave out lots of advice, guidance, face masks and where appropriate enforced the legislation.

During lockdown all crime levels were down 13% year on year. Domestic burglaries were down 27%, but some other crimes have increased, domestic abuse increased by 9% and anti-social behaviour reporting has also increased.

More pressure on the Police due to Government concerns during the pandemic, the Police adopted the 4Es approach in tackling the lockdown regulations with the public and these are:

- Engage
- Educate
- Explain
- Enforce

Since 16th October we have given out approx. 400 4E warnings and approx. 40 fixed penalty notices. We have increased out patrolling. We have increased our PPE and ensure our staff are all working in a covid-19 secure way.

8. QUESTIONS TO THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FROM MEMBERS OF THE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

Cllr Imarni mentioned some members of the public had been distressed when being stopped by the Police. Have you communicated with the public what they should expect from the Police during this time?

MN – effort has been taken by the Police to only enforce in extreme cases and adopt the 4Es approach. Media outlets have informed the public of the rules. The Police have been very measured during this time. We are 9 months in, and the public know what is expected and as the virus is very challenging, we are moving more to enforcement. However, in order to issue a fix penalty notice the police have to demonstrate they have gone through the engage, educate and explain phase before moving to enforcement.

DL – The second lockdown most people know the rules, there has been a step up around how we enforce. Hope the public recognise that we are being fair and firm.

Ian Laidlaw- Dickson – What impact has this has had on the relationship between the Police and the public, public might be feeling Covid fatigue. How do you see the future of Policing in Hertfordshire during and after the pandemic?

DL – using the 4Es has helped, as long as we are policing with the consent of the public around what they expect us to do, I think that is ok. There is likely to be an impact, I think it is one we can manage if we are proportionate in our response.

MN – unprecedented times, we have seen an increase in social disobedience, we have seen people going into shopping malls and not putting face masks on. Increase in attacks on emergency services. Difficult situation, but we are policing in a measured way.

Cllr Scarth – the visibility of the police force/PCSOs is crucial at this time, do you support that?

DL – important to keep PCSO budgets in L/As, they are a very important part of local policing.

Cllr Scarth – The delay in the courts during this time is a concern. This is crucial to the confidence in the criminal system.

DL – I have raised this concern of court backlogs with senior ministers. Magistrates' courts are in a reasonable place, there is a problem with the Crown courts some cases where they have to wait for 2 years before coming to Court, I am very worried about this.

Cllr Curtis – how have officers been kept up to date with changes with the law and what they should be enforcing?

DL – most of this is done under operational guidance, all force email, daily management meeting involving all with Police. The National Police Chief Council will put together guidance on how to enforce the new regulations.

MN – Messages come out of National Police Chief Council, we prepare briefing slides. We also have our mobile devices with guidance on FPNs.

Dr Ramsay – There is reference in the update report to sickness rates for Police and Police Staff, but no information on how many have succumb to Covid?

DL – lost two members of staff to Covid in the first round.

MN – in the first phase, testing wasn't very good. So not aware that some staff had Covid, we are finding this out as some are now having anti body testing. Gone through a low level of absenteeism. During the summer we did a lot of work to make ourselves Covid safe. Last week we had a small outbreak at Cheshunt police station and in the custody suite, those officers and staff are self- isolating. The numbers have remained low. We have put extensive work into making our control room Covid safe, those are individuals who can't work from home we have put in to place a number of measures, cleansing, social distancing, locked down the control

room so only those that work there can go in, everyone wears a face mask, we have kept that room operating effectively during this pandemic.

Cllr Monaghan – looking forward, presumably you have ideas for the management of this going forward, when coming out of the second lockdown.

DL – one of the things the police are good at, is getting on with it and responding as required and they will continue to do a good job as they have been doing.

Cllr Scarth – your report refers to 94 new staff starting, but how many have retired or left? I am very sad to hear about the two deaths through this pandemic, and I feel very sorry for their families.

DL – there are 2187 officers (net) we are experiencing less officers leaving currently. The two deaths were of police staff and not frontline Police Officers, DL echo his sadness over these deaths.

Cllr Scarth – How are you reviewing the mental health of officers?

MN – we have been very keen to ensure we have measures in place to protect the mental health of all our staff. There are lots of things in place, Mick Ball leads on well-being and he does a wellbeing post every Wednesday, we have back up buddy (a wellbeing app), the employee assistance programme, and an assessment for staff involved in a traumatic incident. We have done a lot. We have a strapline in the force that “it is ok not to be ok”.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Cllr Curtis – Information on social media suggested that burglaries in the East of the County had increased.

DL – Burglaries are up 25% in East Herts year to date, but down 27% overall in the County.

Dr Ramsay – The police have experienced entirely new challenges in their role during the pandemic, but is the Commissioner expecting his sequence of annual reports to continue without any major adjustment?

DL – I will reflect on this over the coming months. I don't think you have drawn a correct assumption, there are short term issues and long term issues. We have the same issues as before the pandemic in addition to the current problems. The long term strategy will stay largely the same.

Cllr Scarth – We would like you to encourage the CC to include good news on OWL.

Cllr Monaghan – made a few closing comments:-

I want to encourage all members to attend training. Cllr Woodward and Cllr Scarth recently attended training that was really useful. I am attending the National Conference and the AGM next week and will report back on this.

Myself, the vice chair and MO will bring all this information together and set up some workshops for panel members so we can make this an even better meeting.

We will also look at our website and engagement with the public.

We send out the dates for the PCP meetings a year in advance so I would ask members to note the dates and let us know early if there will be a problem, so we can change the date if possible.

I will also be looking into the problems with 'teams' and why were not able to make this a live meeting.

Thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – 7:00PM THURSDAY 4th February 2021 venue tbc or virtual