



# HERTFORDSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

Thursday 21 November 2013  
Dacorum Borough Council

## MINUTES

**Present**

- Cllr R Hannam, Broxbourne Borough Council (Chairman)
- Cllr M Alexander, East Herts District Council
- Cllr J Dean, Welwyn Hatfield District Council
- Cllr S Drury (substitute), Three Rivers District Council
- Cllr M Gaygusuz (substitute), St Albans and City District Council
- Cllr C Goldstein, Hertsmere Borough Council
- Cllr N Harden, Dacorum Borough Council
- Mr I Laidlaw-Dickson, Co-opted member
- Cty Cllr P Ruffles, Hertfordshire County Council
- Cllr D Scudder, Watford Borough Council

**Also Present**

- Cllr A Franey Welwyn Hatfield District Council
- Mr J Stack, Broxbourne Borough Council
- Mr G Miles, Broxbourne Borough Council
- Mr T Hewins, Broxbourne Borough Council
- Mr D Lloyd, Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)
- Mr R Wilsher, PCC Chief Executive
- Mr D Gibson, Deputy PCC
- Mr J Bugg, Office of the PCC

8 members of the public attended.

### 1 INTRODUCTIONS, APOLOGIES AND WELCOME

#### Apologies

- Cllr Ms S Bedford, Three Rivers District Council
- Cllr Mrs A Brewster, St Albans City and District Council
- Cllr T Hunter, North Hertfordshire District Council
- Cllr Ms S Taylor, Stevenage Borough Council
- Dr M Verlot, Co-opted member
- Ms D Currie, Deputy PCC Chief Executive

## 2 **MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF 25 JULY 2013**

Cllr Scudder pointed out that at the confirmation hearing he questioned the closeness of the Commissioner and the then proposed Deputy Commissioner, suggesting whether knowing the Commissioner was a pre-requisite of being selected for the job.

The minutes of the confirmation hearing and main meeting were agreed.

## 3 **MATTERS ARISING**

None.

## 4 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER**

The Commissioner introduced the report on progress with the Police and Crime Plan (item 7 on the agenda) to facilitate public questions. The Commissioner was elected one year ago and it is an appropriate moment to reflect on what has happened and what difference has been made during the year. It is six months since the Police and Crime Plan, 'Everybody's Business', was adopted, which is approximately 10% through the five year delivery period. The Commissioner welcomed the start made and, in particular, the 9,000 less victims than in the same period the previous year. This is in comparison to a trend elsewhere in the country of crime increasing, including in the West Midlands, Northumberland and other urban areas.

In response to any comments that crime would decrease with or without a Police and Crime Commissioner, the Commissioner described his particular contribution as him being able to reflect on what the public wants from its police force, hold the Chief Constable to account and decide what police resources should be focused on. For example, there has been a focus on anti-social behaviour which has resulted in reported incidents decreasing by one third.

Hertfordshire has a different delivery model to police forces elsewhere in the country. Neighbourhood policing has been protected despite the squeeze on funds, which ensures the local police are embedded in the community and work alongside partners, such as councils and probation services. Crime reduction is achieved through working with partner agencies. The Commissioner has involved partners by establishing a Community Safety Board and a monthly meeting with local authority community safety portfolio holders.

A £250,000 fund has been set up to support local initiatives. Circa £1.7 million of bids were received by the Commissioner's office and a total of £180,000 has been paid out so far. An example of an initiative which received funding is the 'GreenAiders' project in East Hertfordshire, which works with vulnerable residents to ensure their properties are not a target for criminals.

A volunteering strategy has been launched to involve the public in crime reduction via schemes such as neighbourhood watch. There has been a 300% increase in the proceeds of crime recouped which links to the offender pays principle. Technology has been used to increase efficiencies, such as mobile courts, which enables a court hearing to take place via teleconferencing.

Mr Munday asked what steps the Commissioner is taking to validate the crime statistics reported by the Hertfordshire police force. The Commissioner advised he is as concerned as the public with the investigations of the Home Affairs Committee. However, the officers under suspicion are facing disciplinary procedures and have an 'axe to grind'. It is important that the public can place its trust in the police. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary validated Hertfordshire's crime statistics last year which is evidence of good practice. Additionally, the Commissioner has tasked the Chief Constable with a piece of work to report on the integrity of the crime statistics, treatment of vulnerable people and response to victims. An update will be given to the Panel's meeting in January 2014.

Mr Munday questioned whether setting crime reduction targets placed the police under pressure and resulted in crimes being downgraded and hidden in the figures. The Commissioner commented that in Hertfordshire the targets are not set unrealistically high and are decided in conjunction with the Chief Constable. The crime reduction target in Hertfordshire is 2% whereas elsewhere in the country targets are as high as 30%.

Mr Munday highlighted that the Chief Constable of the Derbyshire police force has indicated that the political drive to set targets is unhelpful and taints all levels of the police force in order to achieve crime reduction. For example, activities such as theft can be logged as lost property. There are further issues when bonuses for senior officers are linked to crime reduction targets. The culture of policing is based on reducing crime and not necessarily on value to victims. The Commissioner advised that the piece of work the Chief Constable has been tasked with will also focus on how he will ensure misreporting is not undertaken. Despite the underlying crime reduction target, the Commissioner is comfortable with the increased reports of domestic violence, as this is currently underreported, and sexual offences, as the fallout from Operation Yewtree gives people confidence they can report past crimes.

Mr Ryan asked for clarification as to what made the error occur that allowed the former Deputy Commissioner to start in post prior to the confirmation hearing. The Commissioner advised that his Chief Executive provides guidance on legal matters and unfortunately the then Chief Executive is no longer in post. This matter has already been discussed at great length and there is clearly a disagreement over interpretation of the law. Mr Ryan commented that the Commissioner's former Chief Executive did not clarify the position, although the former Chief Executive of the Panel's host authority did. Mr Ryan expressed dissatisfaction at the resolution of this matter. The Commissioner commented that he wanted to look forwards and the appointment process of the current Deputy Commissioner was informed by the learning of the initial process. The Chairman highlighted that the current process is going in the correct direction.

Mr Munday suggested there is a nuance between constantly talking about reduction targets without considering the accuracy of data. The Commissioner agreed and that is why the Chief Constable will undertake a report on the topic.

## 5 QUESTIONS TO THE PANEL

Mr Ryan supplied eight written questions to the Panel on the Commissioner's compliance with statutory reporting duties. Possible answers to the questions (attached as 'Appendix A') were tabled at the meeting. The Panel approved those answers.

## 6 APPOINTMENT OF A CO-OPTED MEMBER OF THE PANEL

Cllr Harden said that the resignation of Ms Francis is a loss and the Panel should seek to recruit a person of similar calibre. Cllr Alexander queried whether the Panel could revisit the short listed applicants from the previous recruitment process.

### **AGREED that:**

**1 The previous short listed applicants are invited to apply for the vacancy.**

**2 Cllr Franey, Cllr Ruffles and Cllr Harden will form the interview panel.**

## 7 REPORT OF THE PCC ON PROGRESS WITH THE CRIME AND POLICING PLAN AND BUDGET ISSUES

The Commissioner introduced 'Annex B' which accompanied the report on progress with the Police and Crime Plan. The Commissioner's forward plans will seek to consolidate the delivery of the ideas in the five year Police and Crime Plan, covering the period 2013 to 2018. The Commissioner's 2014/15 precept proposals will be detailed at the Panel's January 2014 meeting. Policing budgets will continue to take a fair share of the burden of public sector cuts. A balance between the tax payers' ability to contribute further, retention of local policing resources and identification of other areas where expenditure can be reduced will be considered as part of the precept and budget setting process. The Commissioner advised that his proposal would likely be to increase the precept by 3.4%, depending on what the end of year grant settlement from the Government is.

The Commissioner commented that the Commissioner's Executive Board, Strategic Executive Board and Audit Committee are now well established. The Commissioner has asked the chairman of the Audit Committee, Mr Stuart Nagler, to undertake a wider role, providing greater oversight of audit activity.

The Commissioner advised that he still intends to find an appropriate method to show a sample of complaints at the Panel's meeting. There have been 237 complaints/allegations during the first six months of 2013/14, which is an increase from 149 and 206 during the same period in 2011/12 and 2012/13 respectively. These figures could suggest positive or negative practice, as people may be more concerned or, alternatively, people may be happier to report grievances. Mr Nagler will be asked to focus on the issue of complaints.

Cllr Franey noted that the targets in 'Annex A' which state to 'reduce' without explicitly giving a figure is meaningless and asked the Commissioner why he has not been more specific. The Commissioner advised that the targets are set in conjunction with the Chief Constable and recognise the historical low levels of

crime in Hertfordshire. Cllr Franey suggested that by not including exact figures it would lead to more questions from the public. The Commissioner commented that his Police and Crime Plan is different and is not simply a series of numbers. The main public discussion is not about whether crime has reduced by a certain percentage and, instead, is about whether people feel safe or not.

Cllr Harden noted the target to reduce anti-social behaviour by 2% was exceeded and reduced by 30%. The Commissioner welcomed this news and wanted to focus on the impact rather than the numbers.

Mr Laidlaw-Dickson asked the Commissioner to explain what his contribution to the crime reduction has been and suggested it would be helpful for the Panel to have a session which explains how the crime statistics are calculated. The Panel needs to have confidence that the figures are correct. The Commissioner stated he has made a difference by facilitating organisations to work closer together. For example, the County Council's health and community services are working closer with the police. He also ensures the focus of the Constabulary is appropriate. Hertfordshire is fortunate to not have the problems with serious crime experienced in the London Metropolitan area, which means real issues such as anti-social behaviour can be targeted.

Cllr Ruffles asked where the Constabulary obtains its underlying knowledge about why people commit crime. The Commissioner confirmed that the Constabulary's staff utilise criminology on a day to day basis and he has involvement with think tanks such as Policy Exchange and Reform. The reasoning of why or why not people offend can be attributed to a wide range of factors.

Cllr Harden commented he would like to see more people reporting incidents of domestic violence and expressed concerns about the 999 call figures, as the Commissioner's target was not met. The Commissioner recognised the issue with the 999 calls and has held the Chief Constable to account outside the public arena, although this was the only measure not following the desired trend. There has been a change in structure within the Constabulary and it is anticipated that by the end of the year approximately 89% of 999 calls will be answered in 10 seconds. The figure of 82.3% can be attributed to a change of IT system which has resulted in a difficult period whilst the system is embedded into operations. The issue was that street names were not always correct on the Gazetteer (map). The Commissioner emphasised that he did not want people thinking if they called 999 their call would not be answered, as at the worst point calls were answered within two minutes. Additionally, the Constabulary has one of the highest response rates to 999 calls in the country, as 70% receive a response.

Cllr Scudder asked what the cost was to move the Commissioner's office from Leahoe House, Hertford to Harpenden Police Station. The Commissioner noted that Leahoe House was in a poor state and the landlord (Hertfordshire County Council) had evicted him from the premises, as there were no plans to invest in the building. The move would save money as the new office is located on the top floor of an operational police station which would not otherwise be utilised. There were small costs associated with the move but the office no longer pays rent so the move will pay for itself within one month.

The Chairman queried whether there would be a review into the Constabulary's IT failings and to ensure crimes are coded correctly. The Commissioner advised that the crimes were coded correctly and the Chief Constable will review the IT failings associated with the new command and control system. For example, it took staff 30 seconds longer than necessary to identify locations on the map. The Commissioner will update the Panel on this matter in January 2014.

Cllr Harden asked how many police station front offices have been closed by the police in the past two years. The Commissioner confirmed that 12 were closed in 2011 and eight in 2013. The average footfall of the police station front offices closed in 2013 was three per hour. The combined savings generated from the 20 closures is £900,000 per annum. Policing has changed in the last 40 years. During the 1970s people did not have mobile phones so they may have visited police stations, however, in modern times the visits from the public are limited. People still visit local councils, hence why there is a police presence alongside Three Rivers District Council, there will be at Hertsmere Borough Council in early 2014, and there are also plans for the same service at St Albans City Council and Dacorum Borough Council.

Cllr Gaygusuz raised concerns at the closure of police stations and the lack of police on the beat. He helped a lady who had been pick-pocketed and was on the phone to the police waiting for 15 minutes. A similar scenario occurred when he helped an elderly couple who had lost their car keys. The Commissioner advised that if someone has been a victim of crime and the incident has just taken place a phone call should be made to 999. Alternatively, if an incident occurred in the past a phone call should be made to 101. Phone calls should not be made to individual officer phone numbers as there may not be a response. Calls unanswered longer than 15 minutes are rare.

Mr Laidlaw-Dickson commented that the reduction in crime had little relevance to victims of burglary or people attempting to call the police following an incident. It is important to achieve an efficient outcome that is acceptable to the victim and does not affect public confidence. The Commissioner stated that victims of crime are at the core of the Police and Crime Plan. Hertfordshire Constabulary is in the top two police forces in the country for customer experience which is why there is a need to compare to retail customer satisfaction to drive standards higher. The reason people are often not content with the police is often due to the outcome, which could be that no culprit is caught, no person is taken to trial or nobody is sentenced. The Commissioner recognised more needs to be done but it is not fair to say people are generally not satisfied.

Mr Laidlaw-Dickson queried whether the proposed business unit would be an internal or formal meeting. The Commissioner advised the business unit will be an informal meeting with members of the business community. Further meetings are required between the Commissioner and Mr John Gourd, chairman of the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, to develop the concept further.

## 8 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr Laidlaw-Dickson commented that there had not been a report on complaints against the Commissioner to this meeting. It was noted that this report was on the agenda at the Panel's July meeting and will be presented at the Panel's June/July

meeting each year. After the meeting it was confirmed that there have been three complaints against the Commissioner which have all had the outcome of 'no further action'.

9 **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

7pm, Thursday 23 January 2014 – Watford Borough Council