

Item 9b

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3

Council Chamber,
Council Offices
Spennymoor

Monday,
28 November 2005

Time: 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillor V. Crosby (Chairman) and
Councillors D.R. Brown, Mrs. B.A. Clare, Mrs. J. Gray, M.T.B. Jones,
J.P. Moran, B.M. Ord and A. Smith

Invited to attend: Councillor M. Iveson

In Attendance: Councillors M.A. Dalton, Mrs. B. Graham, J.E. Higgin, A. Hodgson,
Mrs. L. Hovvels and J.G. Huntington

Apologies: Councillors B.F. Avery J.P, G.C. Gray, Mrs. C. Potts, Mrs. L. Smith and
Mrs. C. Sproat

OSC(3)16/05 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
No declarations of interest were received.

OSC(3)17/05 POLICE FORCE RESTRUCTURING
It was explained that the meeting had been convened to consider presentations from representatives of Cleveland and Durham Police authorities in relation to each Authority's views on proposals for Police Force restructuring and to seek the views of the Committee as part of a consultation process (for copies of presentations see file of Minutes).

Members of the Committee were informed of the background to the proposed changes, the reasons for change and the processes and timetable involved in the Home Office formulating a decision on the revised structure.

Presentation by Cleveland Police

The Chief Constable of Cleveland Police, Mr. Shaun Price and the Chairman of Cleveland Police Authority, Mr. McLuckie, were present at the meeting to outline Cleveland Police Authority's views on restructuring and their reasons.

The Committee was informed that Cleveland had looked at and consulted major stakeholders on four options which were :-

- Tees Valley City Region Police Force (Cleveland and South Durham)
- Cleveland Police (current structure)

- Amalgamation between Cleveland and Durham Constabulary
- A Regional Police Force (amalgamation between Northumbria Police, Durham Constabulary and Cleveland Police)

A preferred option had to be submitted to the Home Office by 28th October 2005. The preferred option submitted by Cleveland Police was for a Tees Valley City Region Police Force.

Cleveland Police Authority outlined the advantages of the Tees Valley City Region Police Force option, proposed staffing levels, the anticipated cost of adopting this option, what the re-organisation would mean for Sedgfield Borough, Community Policing and Protective Services.

It was pointed out that a Mori Poll had been undertaken which had shown that the option of a Regional Authority was not popular, with only 21% of residents in Cleveland and Durham favouring that option. Furthermore, as part of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's strategy "The Northern Way", 8 city regions had been identified one of which was Tees Valley. It was considered that services should be provided co-terminus with that area. The force would have a population of 875,000 and would have huge development potential.

Members were then given the opportunity to raise questions in relation to the presentation.

In response to a query raised by a Member on levels of violent crime and detection rates it was explained that the perception of crime was greater than crime itself and Cleveland Police were working with Crime Reduction Partnerships to reduce incidents of violent crime.

Dealing with a query raised by the Committee on collaboration between the Police Forces it was explained that the number one issue for all police forces was to reduce crime so whichever option was chosen they would all work together to maintain that aim.

Members of the Committee also queried how any savings from the proposal would be utilised. In response it was explained that any savings would be reinvested into policing.

Presentation by Durham Constabulary

The Chief Constable of Durham Constabulary Paul Garvin and the Deputy Chief Constable John Stoddart gave a presentation on Durham Constabulary's views in relation to restructuring.

They outlined the drivers for change and the criteria which had been given by the Home Office when considering the options for restructuring.

The Constabulary had consulted stakeholders and considered the following options :-

- Regional Force
- Durham and Northumbria
- Durham Constabulary
- Northumbria North Durham
- Durham and Cleveland
- Tees City Region

Members were informed that the preferred option of Durham Constabulary was a Regional Force covering Northumbria, Durham and Cleveland and this option had been submitted to the Home Office..

The rationale for Durham Police Authority's preferred option was outlined, together with Ministers' views and the impact which it would have on the area, protective services and neighbourhood policing. The anticipated cost etc, likely effects on Council Tax .and area structure were also outlined.

It was explained that this was considered to be the preferred option as the Regional Authority would have the capacity to provide a better level of protective service for the community and would mean better provision of community policing. The Regional Option also met the Home Office Guidelines in relation to population levels of the restructured forces. This option would also be less costly for Council Tax payers.

Members of the Committee were then given an opportunity to question the representatives from Durham Constabulary in relation to the presentation.

In response to a query raised by the Committee on the size of a Regional Force and the opportunity for local engagement it was explained that it would still be possible to have local engagement with a Regional Authority through Crime Reduction Partnerships.

A query was then raised regarding the geographical remoteness of some of the regional area and the differing population levels. It was explained that a Regional Authority would link in with local communities through local Community Inspectors and the 'beat bobbies'.

In response to a query on how savings would be utilised it was explained that a Regional Force would invest into protective services and in particular Neighbourhood Policing.

Cleveland Police Authority and Durham Constabulary then made final closing statements.

The representatives from the Police Authorities and the Council's Cabinet Members then left the meeting while the Committee formulated its comments.

RECOMMENDED:

- 1. That the proposal for a regional force developing the challenge of Level 2 protective services be endorsed and that it is not considered that the Cleveland proposal was a viable alternative for people of Sedgefield Borough.*
- 2. That whichever option is finally adopted Community Policing should not suffer and the affect on Council Tax should be kept to a minimum.*

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

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