

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Police and Crime Panel** held in Committee Room 1A, County Hall, Durham on **Thursday 5 January 2017 at 1.00 pm**

Present:

Councillor J Allen (Chairman)

Durham County Council:

Councillors J Armstrong, D Boyes, P Brookes, A Hopgood and P May

Darlington Borough Council:

Councillor B Jones

Independent Co-opted Members:

Mr N J H Cooke and Mr D K G Dodwell

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Forster and Harker.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute Members in attendance.

3 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 October 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendments:

- Mr Cooke and Mr Dodwell being removed from the attendance under Darlington Borough Council;
- Minute No. 8
 - the last line of the third paragraph should read 'The PCVC informed the Panel that Durham had established a cyber-crime unit and had pushed for a regional unit at Durham Constabulary which was now established'
 - the word 'bulling' on the first line of the sixth paragraph should read 'bullying'
 - the word 'to' should be deleted from the last line of the third paragraph
 - paragraph seven should reflect that officer numbers had reduced to 1150, not 950 and that the force was aiming to build up to 1200 officers by 2018, subject to funding.

5 Consultation on Council Tax Police Precept 2017-18

The Panel considered a report of the Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner which advised of his proposal to consult on an increase in the policing element of the Council Tax precept for 2017-18 (for copy see file of Minutes).

Mr Dodwell informed the Panel that when the Bedfordshire PCC had proposed a 15.85% rise in precept the costs of the subsequent referendum had to be met from the police budget. He asked whether Durham was in the lowest quartile of preceding authorities which would allow for an increase of up to 35 per property.

The PCVC replied that because of the level of precept, Durham was in the third quartile. The Home Office was currently undertaking a review of police funding and Durham was to ask that the ability to raise funds locally was considered. Durham was an area which needed optimum government grant.

Councillor Hopgood informed the Panel that she supported the consultation but asked what the PCVC would do if the majority response was not in favour of the proposed 1.98% increase. She considered that the PCVC should explain the reasoning for a 1.98% rise rather than refer to consultation.

The PCVC reminded the Panel that if the majority response was not in favour of the 1.98% increase the Panel had the ability to veto his decision.

The Monitoring Officer informed the Panel it was important to ensure that it was made clear that any consultation was carried out with an open mind, otherwise it could be open to challenge.

Councillor Jones asked what levels of response the PCVC had for previous precept consultations. The PCVC replied that previous responses had been in the low thousands and had shown a majority in favour of the increase.

Councillor Boyes informed the Panel that he considered there was a general feeling among the public that, while the police were doing a lot more with fewer resources, they were not receiving the service as before. There was a general feeling of paying a lot of Council Tax and not getting the service. If the majority of consultees did not agree to the proposed 1.98% increase there could be a danger of the Panel vetoing the proposal. He would prefer the exercise to be advisory rather than a consultation.

Councillor Armstrong informed the Panel that he considered the consultation document to be comprehensive, particularly that which provided details of what the proposed increase would mean 'on the ground', for example 11 police officers. He also commended the table at Appendix 2 which showed the cost of a 1.98% increase by Council Tax band.

Councillor Jones informed the PCVC that it was important to ensure that any consultation took the opportunity make people aware how highly rated the Durham force was.

Councillor May expressed concern that consultation took place on many matters and the public was not responding. He suggested the PCVC should outline that this was his proposal and to welcome comments from the public on it.

The PCVC informed the Panel that he had a statutory obligation to consult on his precept proposal. When the consultation process was concluded he could either heed the results or do what he considered to be right for the organisation. During the last consultation process nearly 30% of responses had agreed to precept higher than 2%. He reminded the Panel that as the PCVC he was under a legal obligation to deliver an efficient and effective police service.

Mr Dodwell acknowledged that while the PCVC was under a statutory obligation to carry out a consultation he asked whether the width of consultation was prescribed. The PCVC replied that it was not but he wanted the consultation to be a transparent and engaging process.

Resolved:

- (i) That the report be noted
- (ii) That a full report on the outcome of the consultation be presented to the Panel on 2 February 2017.

6 Quarter 2 Performance Report 2016-17

The Panel considered a report of the Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner which provided a Quarter 2 Public Performance Report (for copy see file of Minutes).

The PCVC presented the report, which contained key performance data for the headline measures of Victim Based Crime, Public Confidence, and Victim Satisfaction and performance information on each of the key areas of focus as set out on the refreshed Police and Crime Plan 2015-17.

Mr Dodwell referred to Community Speedwatch which helped to reassure residents that they didn't necessarily have the speeding problem they thought they had. However, he expressed concern at a reference made by the PCVC during his presentation of an ongoing review of the Durham and Cleveland Road Policing Unit and particular an increased issue of speeding tickets, which could be perceived by the public as an income stream. He asked whether speeding tickets would be issued where previously a warning had been given.

The PCVC replied that the issue of speeding must be administered with care and consideration. While a serving Deputy Chief Constable he was opposed to the use of fixed speed cameras because they operated without any discretion. While the force issued no more than 21 speeding tickets per day, perceptions of speeding remained in two-thirds of communities. There was no proposal to make up any funding shortage through the increased issuing of speeding fines, and any money raised would be out into education and prevention programmes.

Councillor Hopgood referred to the table of figures on page 63 of the agenda pack which showed that although the number of Sexual Offences had increased over the

12 months to September 2016, this was represented in the PCVC Verdict column as a smiley face. When read with the footnote below the table the reason for this was explained, Councillor Hopgood suggested that the Verdict face had an asterisk next to it to draw the reader's attention to the note below. The PCVC agreed that this would be amended.

Councillor Hopgood referred to the 11.9% increase in burglaries in the 12 months to the end of September 2016 and asked whether any of this could be attributed to the County Council's new street lighting policy. The PCVC replied that this had been considered a while ago and there was no correlation between the two. There had been an increase in acquisitive crimes, which was perhaps as a result of changes in the benefits system. There was no indication that lighting was an issue, with burglaries taking place during the day when owners had failed to secure their property. Councillor Hopgood thanked the PCVC for his reply and added that it may be useful to the County Council if this was monitored. The PCVC informed the Panel that he would be able to provide feedback on the times of day burglaries took place.

Councillor Brookes informed the Panel that he considered the interactive nature of the PCVC website to be excellent. He referred to the increase in road traffic accident fatalities and asked whether this could be attributed to an increased use of mobile phones while driving.

The PCVC replied that the biggest feature of the fatal road traffic accidents was driver error and that there was no correlation in these cases of the use of a mobile phone while driving. The PCVC added that the force was soon to carry out a week of action on the use of mobile phones while driving.

Councillor Boyes informed the PCVC that he observed drivers using their mobile phones on a daily basis which was frightening and mentioned that some forces were to use strategic drivers to provide feedback of such incidents to the police. The PCVC replied that he was unaware of this initiative and would look in to it. Councillor Jones informed the PCVC that he believed North Yorkshire Police were already doing this.

Councillor Boyes referred to high quality policing and victim satisfaction in his area which showed a negative PCC Verdict. Incidents of arson, shoplifting, burglary and low-level crime had led to a disillusioned public. However, Councillor Boyes added that this disillusionment was not surprising given the level of public spending cuts since 2010. The PCVC replied that it was essential to continue to work in partnership to address such issues, for example partnership work took place with the fire service to address the issue of arson and with the County Council to ensure streets were cleared of rubbish. Services needed to feed in to each other.

Councillor Jones referred to the issuing of 21 speeding tickets across the force and asked how the police decided when to issue a ticket. The PCVC replied that 21 speeding tickets was the maximum which could be processed. The police operated within parameters relating to excess speed and it was then at an officer's discretion whether to issue a speeding ticket. A review of the efficiency of the Durham and

Cleveland Road Policing Unit partnership was being undertaken and the PCVC would bring any proposals to the Panel.

Councillor Allen informed the PCVC that she was pleased with the success of the Checkpoint programme and that the Panel had appreciated the presentation which was made to them on Checkpoint. Councillor Allen referred to the Erase team which had been established to raise awareness of Child Sexual Exploitation and also to Operation Encompass which helped schools support children who had been involved in domestic abuse and suggested it would be useful for the Panel to receive presentations on both of these at future meetings.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

7 Supplementary Performance Report

The Panel considered a report of the Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner which provided additional performance information which was not included in the public performance report (for copy see file of Minutes).

The PCVC informed the Panel that the report had been produced in response to a previous Panel request for crime and incident trend data over time for each of the neighbourhood policing areas and additional comparison data with other forces. He suggested that Panel Members provide him with focused questions on the report so that he could provide responses to the next Panel meeting.

Councillor Allen thanked the PCVC for the extra information which provided the Panel with a trend pattern.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

8 Commissioning in 2017/18

The Panel considered a report of the Head of Governance and Commissioning which provided an update on the PCVC community safety funding and commissioning activities for the financial year 2017/18 (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

9 PCC Decision Records

The Panel considered a report of the Chief of Staff which provided an update on the PCVC decision register since the last meeting, and forward plan (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved;

That the report be noted.

Mr Dodwell and Mr Cooke left the meeting during consideration of the following report.

10 Appointment of Independent Co-opted Members

The Panel considered a report of the Monitoring Officer which sought approval for the appointment of two independent co-opted Members to the Panel (for copy see file of Minutes).

Councillor Armstrong informed the Panel that the current independent co-opted Members had been regular attendees at both Panel meetings and at events arranged by the Panel and had been committed to and supportive of the Panel. He **moved** that the current independent co-opted Members be appointed for a further two years. This was **seconded** by Councillor Jones.

Councillor Boyes informed the Panel that he was an advocate for staggered terms of appointment to avoid the Panel losing such experienced Members at the same time in the future. This was supported by Councillor Hopgood who informed the Panel that such a problem had recently been experienced at the County Council's Audit Committee which had lost two knowledgeable and long serving co-opted Members. Councillor Hopgood proposed that the current independent co-opted Members be re-appointed, one for a two-year tenure and one for a four-year tenure.

The Monitoring Officer sought clarity on whether Councillors Boyes and Hopgood were proposing re-appointment for a two year period, then to be followed by appointments for a two-year and four-year period. Councillor Hopgood replied that he proposal was to reappoint one of the existing Members for a two-year period and the other for a four-year period. The Monitoring Officer replied that this proposal would need to be undertaken through a recruitment process.

Councillor Allen proposed that the Panel reappoint both of the current independent co-opted Members for a period of two years from 1 May 2017 and then subsequent appointments be made for two and four year periods.

Resolved:

- (i) That the current independent co-opted Members be reappointed for a period of two years to 30 April 2019;
- (ii) That from 1 May 2019 one independent co-opted Member be appointed for a period of two years and one independent co-opted Member be appointed for a period of four years.

Mr Cooke and Mr Dodwell re-joined the meeting. Councillor Allen placed on record to them both the thanks of the Panel for their contribution and commitment to the work of the Panel.

The Chairman of the meeting was of the opinion that the following item of business was of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration because of the need to keep the Panel informed of recent assessments by HMIC Inspectorate of Constabulary.

11 Recent HMIC Inspection Reports

The Panel considered a report of the Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner which provided a briefing on the findings of the recent assessments by HMIC Inspectorate of Constabulary into Police efficiency, Police legitimacy, and leadership (for copy see file of Minutes).

Councillor Brookes referred to a recent HMIC report regarding police officers abusing their position to sexually exploit people, including vulnerable victims of crime and asked whether any figures were available for the Durham force and how it would be dealt with contractually. The PCVC replied that police officers did not have contracts because they were officers of the Crown. The Chief of Staff added that such an issue would be treated as an abuse of position. He understood there had been fewer than 5 such cases over the last few years but undertook to provide greater clarity on this after the meeting. Professional Standards had been asked to look in to this issue when the report was published.

Mr Dodwell asked who sat on the Professional Standards Board. The Chief of Staff replied that the Board was chaired by the Chief Constable and an officer from the Office of the PCVC also attended. Additionally the Joint Audit Committee carried out dip sampling of ongoing complaints case files as well as completed files.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.