

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Police and Crime Panel** held in Committee Room 1A, County Hall, Durham on **Thursday 4 January 2018 at 10.00 am**

Present:

Councillor L Hovvels (Chair)

Durham County Council:

Councillors A Bainbridge, P Brookes, P Crathorne and S Robinson

Darlington Borough Council:

Councillors B Jones and M Knowles

Independent Co-opted Members:

Mr N Cooke and Mr D Dodwell

Other Members

Councillor A Hopgood (Durham County Council)

Prior to the commencement of the meeting Councillor Hovvels reported that Gary Ridley, Chief Finance Officer had been awarded an OBE in the Queen's New Year's Honours List. The Panel passed on its congratulations to Gary Ridley on the award.

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Boyes, Harker and Simmons.

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 26 October 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The PCVC reported that at Minute No. 8, bullet point 2 should read 'Improved crime recording' rather than 'Improved crime reporting'. The PCVC also referred to Minute No. 8 and informed the Panel that future precept consultation would take place through 'In the Know'.

5 Precept Setting Consultation

The Panel considered a report of the Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner which advised the Panel of the PCVC's proposal to seek the view of the community on an increase in the policing element of Council Tax for 2018-19 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The PCVC informed the Panel that for the last few years there had been a cap of 2% on the increase which Police and Crime Commissioners were able to apply to Council Tax. The Government had announced that this would change in 2018-19, with the cap now being £12 on a Band D property, which equated to £8 on a Band A property and £24 on a Band H property. This equated to a 7.09% increase in County Durham.

Durham Constabulary had retained its 'outstanding' grading by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) for all three questions in the PEEL Efficiency Inspection. In order to maintain the excellent service they deliver the PCVC proposed to increase the precept by the maximum allowed, but to seek views on the proposal during January.

A 7.09% increase would cost a household in a Band A property an additional 15p per week. An increase of less than 7.09% would result in a lower baseline for any increase in subsequent years, the budget would be permanently lower and the difference could never be recovered.

The PCVC informed the Panel that while he was reluctant to ask local council tax payers to pay more, and recognised that households were under pressure, he was also mindful of his responsibility to maintain an effective police force. In view of the pressures which he was advised the force was going to be facing, in terms of pay awards, increased pension contributions, inflation, and rising demand, the budget needed to be in as strong a position as possible. He was therefore proposing to increase the precept by the maximum available, but would be seeking the views of local people on this proposal.

Councillor Brookes informed the Panel that he considered the proposal by the PCVC to increase the precept on a Band D property by £12 a year to be sensible. 85% of properties within County Durham and Darlington were Band D and below and the current funding formula which was used was not fair to poorer areas.

Mr Dodwell, while being supportive of the PCVC's proposed precept increase, expressed concern that negative feedback may be received if consultation on the proposed increase took place. Alternatively, Mr Dodwell considered that the PCVC should inform the public of his proposals and reasoning for them, adding that the Panel was supportive of the proposals. Mr Dodwell asked why the PCVC needed to consult on his proposed precept when the Combined Fire Authority, Durham County Council and Darlington Borough Council did not consult. The PCVC replied that he was required by statute to seek the views of the public when proposing a precept. Mr Dodwell considered that the PCVC should seek the views of the public on his decision to increase the precept rather than on his proposals to. Councillor

Hovvells added that Durham County Council did carry out consultation on its Council Tax and budget.

Councillor Hopgood informed the Panel that while she was supportive of the proposed 7.09% increase, the PCVC had already been out to consultation on a proposed 2% increase. It was therefore important that the PCVC explain what the 'extra' 5.09% would fund and emphasise that this would help protect services for the future.

Councillor Jones informed the Panel that the PCVC was charged with providing an effective and efficient police service and he supported the proposed precept increase.

Mr Dodwell suggested, and the Panel agreed, that any press release on the proposed precept should contain input from the Chair of the Panel.

Resolved:

That the intention to consult on the proposed precept be noted and that the Chair provide input to a PCVC press release on the proposed precept.

6 Durham and Darlington Victims and Witness Group

The Panel considered a report of the Chief of Staff which provided an update on the work of the Durham and Darlington Victim and Witness Group and its development during the past year (for copy see file of Minutes).

Councillor Hovvells thanked the PCVC for his presentation of the report and requested further reports on the work of the Group as appropriate.

Resolved:

- (i) That the progress of the work of the Group be noted
- (ii) That further reports be brought to the Panel as appropriate.

7 Community Engagement and PACT

The Panel considered a report of the Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner which provided an overview of the community engagement activity, and the methods used, by Durham Constabulary (for copy see file of Minutes).

The PCVC referred to paragraph 25 of the report and informed the Panel that Durham was now ranked 3rd in the country according to the Confidence Survey for England and Wales, not 6th as quoted.

Councillor Brookes informed the PCVC that there was some disquiet that police officers did not attend meetings of Parish Councils. He considered that if a police officer was not be present at such meetings, then a written police report should be provided for the Parish Council meeting. The PCVC replied that if there was a specific requirement for a police officer to attend a Parlsih Council meeting then one would attend and he would look at the provision of written police reports.

Mr Dodwell expressed disappointment that Rural Watch was not mentioned in the report. Rural Watch had experienced good co-operation with North Yorkshire police and was a very proactive group.

The PCVC replied that he valued Farmwatch and had been out on operations, and conceded that it was a point well made by Mr Dodwell.

Councillor Hopgood considered that community engagement and PACT formats should be decided on the basis of what worked best for specific areas rather than a 'one size fits all' approach, adding that PACT meetings could be held an hour before other events, such as Parish Council meetings. Councillor Hopgood referred to the recent hate crime at The Happy Wanderer public house, which was within her electoral division and was unaware that the PCVC had visited the victim. This emphasised the need for closer working between the PCVC and locally elected Members. The PCVC replied that he would try to ensure local Members were kept fully informed.

Councillor Robinson informed the Panel that PACT meetings in his area worked well and praised the knowledge of PC Darren Rogers. He agreed with Councillor Hopgood that PACT formats should be decided on the basis of what worked best for specific areas rather than a 'one size fits all' approach.

Mr Dodwell informed the Panel that a PACT meeting was held at the beginning of meetings of Hurworth Parish Council, and this seemed to work well.

Councillor Knowles informed the Panel that Respect Your Street in Darlington was good while PACT in general had declined. The success of PACT meetings depended on how they were presented and where they were held, with venue changes tending to make people less likely to attend. The PCVC replied that he would discuss this with Chief Inspector Robinson in Darlington.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

8 Q2 Public Performance Report

The Panel noted a report of the Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner which provided a Quarter 2 performance update (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:

That the performance update be noted.

9 PCVC Decision Records

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

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

10 Commissioning in 2017-18

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

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

11 HMIC inspection reports into Police efficiency and Police legitimacy

The Panel considered a report of the Police, Crime and Victims;’ Commissioner which provided details of the findings of the recent assessment by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary into Police efficiency (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:

That the report be noted.