

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Police and Crime Panel** held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Thursday 3 February 2022 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor J Nicholson (Chair)

Durham County Council:

Councillors D Boyes, L Hovvels, D Nicholls, R Potts and M Simmons

Darlington Borough Council:

Councillors Mr D K G Dodwell and Culley (Substitute) (substitute for B Jones)

Independent Co-opted Members:

Mr D K G Dodwell

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors J Dulston, B Jones, A Savory and Mr N Cooke.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor P Culley substituted for Councillor B Jones.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the Meeting held 10 January 2022 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

4 Declarations of interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

5 Precept Consultation

The Panel considered a report of the Police and Crime Commissioner which provided an update on the process for setting the Policing precept for 2022/23 and sought the Panel's support for an increase of £10 per household per year for properties in Band D, and commensurate increases for other properties (for copy see file of minutes).

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) highlighted key pressures on the budget and explained that the ability to raise funding was limited due to the number of properties which were in Band A. The government funding, which was reviewed every 12 months by government, provided for a Police Grant increase of 5.7% to £106.1m, allowing for an additional 90 Police Officers to be employed within Durham and Darlington. She went on to explain that in order to achieve a balanced budget for 2022/23 (£146.8m), it would be necessary to increase the precept by the maximum permitted; £10 per household, per year (Band D).

She expressed her thanks to the residents for taking the time to complete the on-line survey and share their views and stated their feedback was valued and would help the Police Force going forward.

The Chief Finance Officer gave a presentation on the Policing Precept 2022/23 (for copy see file of minutes).

In terms of deliverables, he explained that recruitment was positive but that it was a significant challenge for the force to get all new officers trained and up to speed. He referred to the new custody build and advised that work had commenced on this. In relation to the fleet replacement, he advised that the Force was moving towards an electric fleet with the expectation of moving to a green fleet by 2030.

With regards to finance, he explained that there was a £0.4m collaboration reserve for Durham and Cleveland special ops unit and the Regional Organised Crime Unit led by Northumberland and a £0.9m capital and revenue grant which will be used during 2024/25.

Councillor Boyes raised his concerns regarding the £10 increase and explained that this would be in addition to the increase in council tax, the increase in the cost of food bill which would further impact on the cost of living. He advised that people would be willing to accept the increase providing that they felt it was justified. He described the lawlessness behaviour that was present in his area of Easington and gave examples of open drug dealing, theft and the riding of off-road bikes. He explained that there had been a major deterioration in police services over the last two years and that more PCSOs were needed on the streets.

The PCC highlighted that Durham was top of the league table at the recent inspection conducted by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire Rescue Services (HMICFRS), being outstanding in 9 out of 12 areas, but explained that the data was difficult to compare with other forces. As the regime had recently changed, she offered to provide an update of the comparative data at the next meeting. She advised that despite this there was still a lot of work to do and stressed the need for police officers to come forward for training. She assured Members that she would deliver on what mattered to the public and would work with members regarding this.

Councillor Boyes accepted that Durham was doing well in comparison to other forces but that there was a marked deterioration in his area of Easington Colliery, and that the people in this area were not seeing the great service.

Mr Dodwell applauded the recruitment process but asked for clarification on the number of officers that would be taken out of their role to provide training and what the impact of this would be on the front-line.

The Chief Finance Officer confirmed that there was a dedicated training team and therefore no front-line officers would be withdrawn. He explained that before independent patrol status could be given to a new recruit, a six-month training course would be undertaken which involved a combination of classroom and patrol training. He advised that timescales for training were lengthened when an individual joined without a degree as they needed to study part time at university for three years which affected their ability to be on the streets.

Councillor Hovvels welcomed the extra police officers that were going to be recruited. She went on to raise her concerns regarding the long lens cameras and expressed that her community would like to see an increase in CCTV and that this would give residents re-assurance due to the high volume of crime that had taken place.

The PCC advised it was important to provide members and residents with an update on funding and what this had achieved, including ANPR cameras. She went on to explain that she was keen to push area-based problem-solving partnership approach down to neighbourhood policing levels to tackle crime and disorder so that issues and problems could be better identified and targeted.

In relation to off road bikes, Councillor Hovvels asked how much from this budget would be spent on addressing this problem and how this compared to last year's budget, and further asked how much was allocated from this precept. The Chief Executive agreed to report back to members on this matter.

Councillor Nicholls praised the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office for their transparency regarding the precept and commended them for putting themselves out there and engaging with residents. He went on to ask how much of the allocated precept would go towards tackling violence against women and girls.

The Chief Finance Officer confirmed that all front-line police officers dealt with issues relating to domestic abuse which included violence against women and girls and that it was difficult to put a cost on it. He advised that this was signposted as a priority, and he was happy to contact Councillor Nicholls directly to expand on this.

Further to this, the PCC highlighted the importance of the upcoming public accountability meeting and recommended members promoted this. She advised that there was a domestic abuse and survivors champion that were able to attend future meetings to further discuss this issue. She also noted that a strategy was being developed for violence against women and girls, and this would identify the areas where money spent would have the biggest impact.

Councillor Potts quoted the rise in precept figures for the last four years and stated this equated to 32.1% and believed it was wrong to increase the precept by the maximum level, particularly when for some residents it was a choice between eating or heating due to the rising costs of living. He noted the deliverables in the

report but stated it did not include the victims champion, anti-social behaviour champion, domestic abuse survivors champion or the safer streets co-ordinator.

Councillor Potts suggested the plan for the new custody suite be withdrawn which would save £21m. He recommended that £5m of the savings should be used to improve the existing custody suite with the remainder used to protect against future precept rises in the coming years. He confirmed that he rejected the proposed increase.

In response, the Chief Finance Officer accepted the figures quoted. He advised that there were 42 PCC precepts in total and that 34 of these had proposed the maximum increase. In terms of future capital costs, he highlighted that these had not been included and that new vehicles would be needed for the increase in staff and pointed out that no money would be received for this. In answer to the question regarding the new custody suite, he explained that the contract for this had already been signed and added that it was not possible to make the current suite home office compliant.

Further to this, the PCC advised that she had viewed all the custody suites and met the custody sergeants and officers who were on duty and that they had all supported the new suite. She explained that it was not just about saving money, it was about providing the correct environment for staff and detainees and suggested that Councillor Potts speak with custody sergeants and officers regarding this.

In terms of the victim's champion, anti-social behaviour champion, domestic abuse survivors champion, the PCC explained that these were all part of the strategy and that there were two and half years left to deliver the plan. She explained that these roles were all grant funded as was the safer streets co-ordinator which was a time limited role.

Councillor Culley raised an issue relating to Cockerton Station, the Chief Finance Officer agreed to come back to her with a response.

Councillor Culley went on to ask whether additional police officers would be recruited if the precept was vetoed. The Chief Finance Officer confirmed that £1.6m had been requested for this in the precept. He advised that recruitment would continue but explained that it would jeopardise PCSOs, call handlers and new IT.

Mr Dodwell commented that from experience where charges had been frozen for 12 months, that this had created future problems, and he was therefore in support of the increase and stated it was critical to keep moving forward.

The PCC stressed the importance of supporting the front line and explained she intended to deliver on the priorities of the public.

Councillor Hovvells **moved** the precept for recommendation. Mr Dodwell **seconded** this.

The Chair invited the Clerk to the Panel to set out the procedure and process when considering the precept report. The Clerk to the Panel confirmed the timescales to

consider the proposed precept in accordance with the Regulations. The Clerk outlined the option of the Panel to veto the proposal and that this would require agreement by two thirds of the full membership to veto.

Upon a vote being taken it was

Resolved:

- (i) That the current position of the consultation and the outcome be noted;
- (ii) That the proposal for a £10 precept increase at Band D be approved;
- (iii) That there be no veto to the proposal; and,
- (iv) That a report be produced.

6 Performance Progress Report

The Panel considered a report of the Police and Crime Commissioner which updated the panel regarding the current work strands associated with developing performance management of the Police and Crime Plan 2021-2024 (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved: That the content of the report be noted and to await the new iteration of the Quarterly Performance Report.

7 Media Report

The Panel considered a report of the Police and Crime Commissioner which provided an update of press and social media coverage concerning the work of the Durham Police and Crime Commissioner since the previous meeting (for copy see file of minutes).

The Chief Executive advised that there had been significant activity since the last meeting and explained that they were running short in terms of media capacity.

Councillor Nicholls expressed his gratitude to the Police and Crime Commissioner for their work with the media. He observed that they had been in touch with the public about violence against women and girls and thanked them for bringing this issue to the forefront.

Councillor Boyes echoed the comments from Councillor Nicholls and appreciated the PCC's answers to the difficult questions raised.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

8 PCC Commissioning Update

The Panel considered a report of the Police and Crime Commissioner which updated the panel on decisions taken at the Commissioning Board in December 2021 (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved: That the report be noted.

9 HMICFRS Inspections

The Panel considered a report of the Police and Crime Commissioner which outlined the findings of the recent report by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) that had required a PCC comment, listed below:

- National Child Protection Inspection- Post-inspection Review (for copy see file of minutes).

In reference to the sex offenders register, Councillor Boyes asked whether this had been updated. The Accountability and Scrutiny Officer confirmed that the Force engaged well with Visor and were compliant with its requirements.

Councillor Boyes raised an additional question regarding the protection of children who moved into the area, the Finance Officer confirmed he would report back to Members at the next meeting with regards to this.

Councillor Hovvells asked if a further report could be produced which identified the progress. The Accountability & Scrutiny Officer agreed to this.

Councillor Potts disputed the summary given of the Post Inspection Review and believed it did not accurately reflect the findings within the full report. He referred to the National Child Protection Inspection October 2019 and highlighted some of the concerns raised regarding the constabulary's response to the incidents of children at risk of sexual exploitation, stating that police were not deployed straight away, recording and supervision were inconsistent and that the national child abuse image database was not used efficiently. He stated that out of the 20 child abuse cases that were audited, 9 were good, 16 required improvement and 4 were inadequate. He asked why no one had been held accountable for this and whether it was possible for an investigation to be requested to address these issues.

The Chief Executive explained that an investigation would be an operational issue for the force.

The PCC clarified that accountability and executive meetings were to take place where the findings of the report would be raised and addressed.

The Accountability and Scrutiny Officer appreciated the detail surrounding the report but stated that it was difficult to find a balance with the summary.

Councillor Boyes thanked Councillor Potts for his research and agreed that the report needed to accurately reflect the findings.

In response, the Chief Executive advised that full documentation could be attached for future meetings if Members would find this useful but believed the summary of the report was easier to digest due to complexities of the issues.

Resolved: That the report be noted with the addition of an updated report actioned through the Police and Crime Commissioner Office.

10 Complaints Update

The Panel considered a report of the Monitoring Officer and Clerk to the Police and Crime Panel which provided an update on complaints relating to the Police and Crime Commissioner or the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner (for copy see file of Minutes). It was noted that between 23 December 2021 and 26 January 2022 there have been no formal complaints received in accordance with the procedure.

Resolved: That the report be noted.