

## **DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

At a Meeting of **Police and Crime Panel** held in **Committee Room 1, Town Hall, Darlington** on **Thursday 12 December 2024** at **1.30 pm**

**Present:**

**Councillor L Brown (Chair)**

**Durham County Council:**

Councillors L Hovvels, D Nicholls, S Quinn (Substitute) and K Robson

**Darlington Borough Council:**

Councillor N Johnson

**Independent Co-opted Members:**

Mr N Hallam and Mr R Rodiss

### **1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Ali, D Boyes, LA Holmes, G Lee and A Savory.

### **2 Substitute Members**

Councillor S Quinn substituted for Councillor D Boyes.

### **3 Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

### **4 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Councillor D Nicholls referred to the briefing note circulated on behalf of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC).

He added there had been reference to what details to be available in terms of named contacts at the neighbourhood level, for example telephone numbers and e-mail addresses.

Deputy Chief Constable Ciaron Irvine noted changes coming from the new Government in terms of 'Neighbourhood Guarantee' and noted the work undertaken by Durham Constabulary in terms of establishing its 'single online home', which was now live. He noted that it would be updated in line with national guidance, however, all Forces were awaiting that guidance from Government.

Councillor D Nicholls noted there was a balance in terms of contact methods and what was practical operationally.

Councillor L Hovvels noted that Councillor G Lee had also previously asked as regards splitting statistics between urban and rural areas so that the Panel could see any differences in performance. The Head of Business Services, OPCC, Sweetie Sahani noted details were within the briefing note circulated, with some manual work required and with discussions around this being ongoing.

## **5 Report on Estate Update**

The Panel received an update report on the Durham Constabulary Estate, presented by Deputy Chief Constable C Irvine (for copy see file of Minutes).

Deputy Chief Constable C Irvine noted that today was the opening and first day of operation of new Custody Suite, within the new Investigative Hub. He explained as regards the Officers and Staff that moved in, including Investigation Teams, Prisoner Handling, Evidence and Property, and Firearms Teams. He reminded the Panel that it had been three years since ground had been broken on the site.

Deputy Chief Constable C Irvine explained as regards the size of the Force Estate, noting that its cost in terms of services and maintenance was second only to wages for the Force. He added that, with an aging estate, costs were increasing over time and that it represented a significant challenge in terms of the cost. He noted that the completion of the new Investigative Hub, and movement of staff into the new facility was a good first step. He explained as regards factors that fed into priorities and change, such as increased computer load with associated sufficient electricity supplies; greater mobility of staff with newer technology and equipment; greener technologies, electric vehicles, solar, heat pumps and so on.

He reminded the Panel of the improvements to the Force estate over the last 10 years, with the development of the new HQ at Aykley Heads, new warehousing facility at Peterlee, and the Investigative Hub at Bowburn. He added that newer, more agile ways of working with colleagues from the Fire and Rescue Service, and Local Authorities were also beneficial in terms of estate management.

Deputy Chief Constable C Irvine explained that the drafting of an estate policy for the Police and OPCC was no small task, with the development of commercial buildings and the demands placed upon it demanding a higher specification. He noted that the Government's funding settlement would be important, however, all would work to ensure there was not an impact upon operational delivery. He emphasised that the Force was one of the best in the county and that the Chief Constable had her plan as regards operational delivery and that the estate and fleet had to fit. He noted that the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) was committed to not withdrawing from towns and villages, with coverage remaining to be able to deliver local policing, however it may look different to what existed now. He gave an example being the floor space available within the Durham City Station at Elvet, and how best to retain presence within the city.

Deputy Chief Constable C Irvine explained that Government funding in this regard was decreasing, with it being £10million annually in the past, having reduced to zero by 2021. He noted that capital was now funded via revenue or borrowing, and while the Force was in a strong position in terms of borrowing it would be important to maintain that strong position.

Councillor K Robson noted he was one the Local Members for Newton Aycliffe and asked as regards the presence within the town, noting the current arrangements two miles away on the 'trading estate', with a small presence in town itself. He added that speaking to Councillors and the Local Sergeant, anti-social behaviour had increased 28 percent within the West Ward. He noted that response appeared to be disappearing and asked what programme was in place as regards any replacement. Deputy Chief Constable C Irvine noted that Councillor K Robson was correct in terms of the ongoing enquiries as regards the Fire Station, as well as bigger facilities at Glow Church. He noted there were more Response Officers within Newton Aycliffe now, and that there was not a move to exit from Newton Aycliffe. Councillor K Robson noted that, via the MP, he had enquired as regards former MoD properties, ideal for use by vehicles, and hopefully that could be an option. He added that speaking to people in the town, they did not feel safe with the station being two miles away.

R Rodiss noted that the Panel had discussed the issues associated with the new Custody Suite and the impact that would be felt on areas such as Crook, Stanley and Durham City as result of consolidation and moves to Spennymoor. He reiterated his previous comments as regards consolidation of investigators leading to them having no 'ownership' not being from within a particular area specifically. He added he felt it was obvious that the station in Durham City would close, and that the Force was sleepwalking into centralisation. He added previously there used to be 135 Officers working out of Newton Aycliffe, with that number being practically zero now. He noted that within a town of around 35,000 people, he felt that it was not appropriate. Deputy Chief Constable C Irvine noted that not all duties would be centralised, noting that only Bishop Auckland and Durham City CID were consolidated within the new Investigative Hub, with Stanley and Consett CID staying in their current locations, and with Darlington and Peterlee CID also staying in their current locations. He noted the only centralised function was that of prisoner handling, adding that facilities at Bishop Auckland had been condemned via Inspection. He noted that the Force was committed to retain local Neighbourhood Teams, including an additional 20 Neighbourhood Police Officers, with around 100 Officers now, and explained that changes were in order to be best placed to deliver services in our communities.

Councillor D Nicholls thanked the Deputy Chief Constable C Irvine and staff from the OPCC for arranging visits for the Panel to the new Investigative Hub, having been very informative for Members. He noted that the new, higher-quality facility would be much improved, and help with morale, as well as being an area that was improved upon responding to inspections. He added that it would be important to keep the Panel up-to-date in terms of draft estate policy, and welcomed the retention of local stations, such as at Framwellgate Moor. Deputy Chief Constable C Irvine noted that the Estate Strategy was in development with the Chief Constable and the PCC and that further information would come back to the Panel accordingly.

L Hovvels welcomed the report, noting that many older facilities were indeed no longer fit-for-purpose, and that the visit to the new Investigative Hub had been very impressive. She noted concern in terms of backlog in maintenance of some of the estate and funding required in that regard. Deputy Chief Constable C Irvine noted that not all maintenance issues were due to legislative changes or dilapidation, some were simply ongoing maintenance, though some works required were due to changes in Fire Safety regulations.

The Chief of Staff, OPCC, Andrea Petty noted that in relation to Newton Aycliffe, the PCC had consulted with residents and had secured the facility within the Glow Church out of town, as well as within the town itself. She reiterated that the issues raised would be noted and that there was activity in terms of looking for alternative premises.

Councillor K Robson noted the adage, the proof of the pudding was in the eating, and reiterated as regards a 21 percent increase in anti-social behaviour. He noted boundary changes that would impact on the next Council election, with larger areas, and noted that visibility of Officers on the beat was important, with the sight of uniformed Officers having a preventative effect in terms of crime and anti-social behaviour. The Chief of Staff, OPCC A Petty noted that Newton Aycliffe had been a trailblazer area and had, as a result, additional patrols within the area, including with Neighbourhood Wardens from the Local Authority. She noted that in the period September to October anti-social behaviour had increased, and the Police would be able to look at hotspots to target those areas effectively.

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

**6 Police and Crime Commissioner's Performance and Delivery Update Report 2024/25**

The Chief of Staff, OPCC, A Petty presented the PCC's Performance and Delivery Update Report which covered the period July to September 2024 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Chief of Staff, OPCC, A Petty noted highlights included as regards a reduction in the respond time for 999 calls; introduction of Salesforce and reduced delays within the BT system; an increase of 34 Officers within the quarter, above national targets; targeting of resources in hotspot areas; and seasonal campaigns targeting drink and drug driving, as well as other offenses such as use of mobile phones while driving. She noted that while there was positive change in terms of introduction of 'Right Care, Right Person', the PCC still had concerns in relation to children missing from care homes.

Councillor L Hovvels noted Safer Streets Funding Round 5 would come to an end in March 2025 and asked what would replace that funding going forward. She added another important area was having the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) bid into funding streams, an area she felt County Durham and Darlington often missed out on. She added the VCS could also help in terms of future bids and may open up more funding opportunities. The Chief of Staff, OPCC, A Petty noted funding that had been made available to the VCS and noted some of the awards in relation to Safer Streets within County Durham and Darlington. Councillor L Hovvels noted that County Durham and Darlington needed that additional funding, and there were many good VCS organisations working hard in our area to deliver services.

The Chief of Staff, OPCC, A Petty noted there may be opportunities via the North East Combined Authority (NECA), in relation to tackling issues such as gambling. She referred to the work of Durham Community Action in terms of their Community Peer Mentoring.

Councillor D Nicholls welcomed additional call handlers and asked as regards Crimestoppers and an external project officer, who would have gone into schools, which had failed to materialise. He noted the England and Wales figures of one in four women being the victim of domestic abuse within their lifetime. He noted the positive work being done in terms of two temporary officer posts, adding that we could not afford to lose those posts and rather the positive work being undertaken should increase. The Chief of Staff, OPCC, A Petty noted that in relation to the first point, the 'Fearless Worker', the funding had not been available, noting bids via the OPCC and others. She added she would speak with the Regional Crimestoppers Officer and provide and update accordingly. In respect of the domestic Abuse Workers, the Chief of Staff, OPCC, A Petty noted that victims' funding was reducing and difficult decisions would have to be made. She noted that the prevention of violence against women and girls was a Government priority and was an area of work the PCC championed.

R Rodiss noted that going into schools to speak to children was good and important, however, there was a cohort of young people that did not attend school and asked how we could reach out to those groups of young people. The Chief of Staff, OPCC, A Petty noted those not in education could also often include vulnerable young people and therefore it was important for the Police and Local Authorities to work in this area. She noted from the OPCC, the PCC commissioning in relation to work at Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), with those young people who were on the cusp of dropping out of school and noted the work in terms of preventative and diversionary services, as well as the new Government's 'Youth Hubs'. She noted the PCC would continue to push for funding for County Durham and Darlington.

Councillor K Robson noted an increase in those parking on double yellow lines, especially near schools, and asked if there could be an opportunity to target those offenders, with the use of technology to make the process more 'automatic'. The Chief of Staff, OPCC, A Petty noted the 'Park Safe' scheme, rolled out to ten schools within the County, with more schools being added soon. She explained that parents and young people can upload photos straight to the Police, with those schemes in place working very well. The Chair noted that within Durham City, Parking Wardens issued penalty charges in relation to those parked on double yellow lines.

Councillor D Nicholls noted the reference to the 'Fearless Project and reminded the Panel that young people themselves can be victims of crime and noted that it was important to have those Officers in place to support young people. The Chief of Staff, OPCC, A Petty noted Durham Agency Against Crime (DAAC) Apprentices that worked in schools to help keep young people safe, and added there was the work of the Mini Police Scheme, as well as Police and Community Support Officers (PCSOs) in primary schools, all being well received by our schools and young people.

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

**7 Independent Custody Visitor Annual Report 2023/24**

The Chief of Staff, OPCC, A Petty presented the report relating to the Independent Custody Visitor Annual Report 2023/24 (for copy see file of minutes).

Councillor D Nicholls noted the report referred to some custody visitors not being able to see detainees and asked what this referred to. He asked if there was any comparison to other Forces so that the Panel could then look at issues such as frequency of visits in that wider context. He added the new facilities at the Investigative Hub would help improve standards. The Chief of Staff, OPCC, A Petty noted that if a person in custody was drug or alcohol intoxicated, that could present a safety issue where a custody visitor may not be able to view that person. She added that the role was voluntary and that it was always an area where more volunteers would be welcomed. She added that while there were no national statistics in this area, there was recent discussions around a national scheme where data could be uploaded to help in terms of benchmarking and targeting of resources. Councillor D Nicholls noted he was pleased to take assurance from the Independent Custody Visitors' Annual Report.

N Hallam asked as regards the data on page eight of the Annual Report which stated the number of visits to each custody suite, and asked if additional data was recorded in terms of the day of the week and time of day, as this may differ from weekdays and weekends, during the day and during the night. The Chief of Staff, OPCC, A Petty noted that data could be pulled in for future reports.

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

## **8 National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels AGM Report**

The Panel considered a report of the Clerk and Monitoring Officer, Helen Bradley to the Police and Crime Panel which provided an update on the National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels AGM Report (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Clerk and Monitoring Officer noted that the Vice-Chair, Councillor G Lee, had attended the AGM as representative of the Panel. She noted the main issue that had been highlighted was the importance of training for Police and Crime Panel Members, with Durham and Darlington Members meeting all such requirements.

### **Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

## **9 Complaints Update**

The Panel considered a report of the Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Police and Crime Panel which provided an update on complaints relating to the PCC or the Deputy PCC (for copy see file of Minutes).

It was noted that the last report the Panel received in relation to complaints was at its meeting on 19 September 2024, with three further complaints received since that meeting. The Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Panel explained that two had been discussed with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee and it had been agreed there would be no further action as they were either repeat complaints and/or fell outside the remit of the Panel. She added the third complaint was on the agenda for consideration by the Panel today. She added two complaints had recently been received, subsequent to agenda papers being issued, and those would be looked at in accordance with procedure and the Panel would be updated accordingly at a future meeting.

### **Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

## **10 Police and Crime Panel Work Programme 2024/25**

The Panel considered a report of the Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Panel on the Panel's Work Programme for 2024/25 (for copy see file of minutes).



The Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Panel noted that it had been agreed that the work programme would remain as a standing agenda item, to allow for any new issues to be addressed and to help prioritise the work of the Panel. She noted that the domestic violence had been raised as an issue the Panel wished to have further information and asked Members for their comments.

Councillor D Nicholls noted it had been an issue he had raised and noted the work of a number of pilot schemes around the country, including one he believed to be in Nottinghamshire. He noted there was a new Government with an Under-Secretary of State for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women and Girls and therefore he felt it would be important for the Panel to have the most up-to-date context in this regard.

The Clerk and Monitoring Officer noted that Councillor D Nicholls could speak with the OPCC and then, with the agreement of the chair and Vice-Chair further information could come back to Members, likely the march meeting of the Panel.

Councillor D Nicholls asked if Force processes in terms of dealing with those people with mental health issues could be looked at by the Panel. The Chief of Staff, OPCC A Petty noted that a report relating to 'Right Care, Right Person' had been considered by the Panel at its meeting in June. Councillor D Nicholls asked if this was an issue that could come back to the Panel for an update. The Principal Overview and Scrutiny Officer, Stephen Gwilym noted that 'Right Care, Right Person' was only recently in effect, September 2024 and therefore a further report could be table for a future meeting, once more progress had been made on implementation. The Chief of Staff, OPCC A Petty noted that Phases Three and Four would go live in February 2025. The Clerk and Monitoring Officer noted that if the Panel wished, the matter could be one for consideration when setting the work programme for 2025/26. Members agreed.

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

## **11 Exclusion of the Public**

### **Resolved:**

That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

## **12 Complaint against the Police and Crime Commissioner**

The Panel considered a report of the Monitoring Officer and Clerk to the Police and Crime Panel in relation to a complaint against the Police and Crime Commissioner.

The Panel resolved not to publish the outcome of the complaint.