

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Police and Crime Panel** held in Committee Room 1A, County Hall, Durham on **Thursday 4 December 2014 at 1.00 pm**

Present:

Councillor L Hovvels (Chair)

Durham County Council:

Councillors J Armstrong, D Boyes and M Dixon

Darlington Borough Council:

Councillors S Harker and B Jones

Independent Co-opted Members:

Mr N J H Cooke

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Brookes, S Forster, D Stoker and A Willis and Mr D Dodwell.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor M Dixon as substitute Member for Councillor P Brookes.

3 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 October 2014 were confirmed by the Panel as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

With reference to Minute No. 5, the Panel conveyed their congratulations to PC Amanda Holland on winning the WOW! You Changed My Life award.

4 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Draft Refreshed Police and Crime Plan and Precept 2015-17

The Panel considered a report of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) which presented the draft of the refreshed Police and Crime Plan in advance of its launch for consultation (for copy see file of Minutes).

The PCC informed the Panel that consultation on the draft Plan would commence on 15 December and sought the comments of the Panel on the draft Plan by 10 December, in advance of the consultation.

Councillor Armstrong referred to the establishment of a Rape Scrutiny Panel as mentioned on page 27 of the Plan and sought further details of the membership of the Panel. Sweety Sahani, Staff Officer to the PCC replied that the Panel consisted of 10 independent members who had all shown knowledge of or had experience in dealing with this area of crime. The Panel had first met on 10 November which was as a training session around cases where no further action was recorded, and the next meeting would focus on an individual case to enhance the Panel's understanding of issues. The PCC informed the Panel that an update on the work of the Rape Scrutiny Panel would be brought in six months' time.

Councillor Armstrong then referred to the PCC's views on the decriminalisation of drug addiction as set out on page 19 of the draft Plan and asked whether the PCC had received responses from MPs or other police forces on this. The PCC replied that MPs had been invited to attend a recent drugs symposium he had hosted on 27 November 2014 but none had attended. Support had been received from a couple of PCC's and a further report on this would be brought back to the Panel.

Councillor Boyes referred to the 'Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy' which was mentioned under the 'And Everything Else' section of the Plan and considered the inclusion of the Strategy under this section may provide an inappropriate perception. The PCC agreed that reference to the Strategy should be included elsewhere in the Plan and not under this section.

Councillor Boyes referred to Accountability and Performance Management and asked whether a direction of travel of performance of the force since the election of the PCC could be included in the Plan. Alan Reiss, Chief of Staff for the PCC replied that while this information could be included, the PCC's Annual Report already included past performance data.

Councillor Hovvells informed the PCC that discussions were ongoing around drugs strategy within both the Darlington and the Durham Safety Partnership Boards and the Health and Wellbeing Board and there was a need for these organisations to be part of the PCC's drugs debate.

Resolved:

That the draft Police and Crime Plan be noted.

6 Update on Priority Item "To tackle the harm caused by alcohol and drugs to individuals and communities"

The Panel considered a report of the Police and Crime Commissioner which provided an update on the priority item 'To tackle the harm caused by alcohol and drugs to individuals and communities' (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Staff Officer to the PCC informed the Panel that statistics relating to alcohol-related crime were available and would be circulated to Panel Members.

Councillor Dixon referred to the increase in licensed premises mentioned within the report and asked whether there was now a reduction in the number of pubs closing. The PCC replied that although there were still a number of licensed premises closing in rural and remote communities, the night time economy in Durham City remained vibrant. There was a presumption that alcohol licence applications would be granted unless it could be proved disorder would arise as a consequence, and this was difficult to prove. Additionally, the community voice to object to such applications was not being activated.

Councillor Boyes informed the Panel that he had attended a drugs conference in the summer which had made reference to the diminishing problems of traditional drugs such as cocaine and heroin compared to the increasing problem of legal highs. Councillor Boyes also referred to Operation A.R.I.E.S which was being carried out in partnership with supermarkets, yet some supermarkets sold alcohol to underage customers. The PCC replied that the outlets for legal highs needed to be closed, including shops and websites, as had been done in Ireland. Referring to Operation A.R.I.E.S. the PCC informed the Panel that the Alcohol Harm Reduction Unit worked with supermarkets to address underage purchases, and one supermarket in Durham City had amended the way it sold alcohol in a bid to prevent underage sales. However, young people were being supplied with alcohol from home by their parents, and this needed to be addressed.

Councillor Jones supported challenges to license applications, particularly those for 24 hours licenses, which had an effect on the night time economy and policing and requested an update for the Panel on the Night Time Levy. He added that the drugs symposium recently organised by the PCC provided useful information and he praised the quality of the speakers.

The PCC informed the Panel that he was supporting the work of Tony Hogg, PCC for Devon, who was seeking a change to Licensing legislation, and work which had been undertaken with balance in the North East had been provided to Tony Hogg.

Resolved:

That the report be noted

7 Role of Joint Chief Finance Officer - Safeguards Protocol

The Panel considered a joint report of the Chief of Staff of the PCC and Head of Internal Audit, Durham County Council regarding the drafting of a Joint Chief Finance Officer Safeguards Protocol at the request of the Joint Audit Committee (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:

That the Protocol be approved.

8 Commissioning Activity relating to Priority Areas

The Panel received an update from Alan Reiss, Chief of Staff, Office of the Durham Police and Crime Commissioner on commissioning activity relating to priority areas.

The Chief of Staff informed the Panel that there were four commissioning budgets, these being Community Safety Grant, Restorative Justice, Victim Services and Community Safety Fund and provided the following update to the Panel:

- Community Safety Partnerships – meetings had taken place with both Durham and Darlington Community Safety Partnerships and funding to both CSPs would be reduced by 5% in the next financial year.
- Restorative Justice – a lot of work was taking place regarding restorative justice and a restorative justice co-ordinator was co-ordinating work in Durham and Darlington.
- Victim Services – work was taking place with both Northumbria and Cleveland to identify what existed around specialist services and any gaps that existed.
- Community Safety Fund (CSF) – consideration was being given to how the CSF would operate in the next financial year. Last year there were two bidding rounds for the fund and bids of £1m were made for the £100,000 available. Next year it was likely there would be a biddable fund for the whole year and some funding may be ring fenced specifically for innovative projects.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

9 HMIC Inspection Report

The Panel received an update from the Chief Finance Officer on the HMIC first Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2014 (PEEL) assessment in terms of effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy

The Chief Finance Officer informed the Panel that Durham Constabulary had been graded as the top performing police force in the country at tackling crime. The evidence from inspections, together with the context within which force operated, allowed HMIC to make an assessment of each of the 43 police forces in England and Wales.

In the effectiveness strand of the assessment, Durham was the only force in the country judged to be outstanding at investigating offending. The force was also rated as outstanding at tackling anti-social behaviour and good at reducing crime and preventing offending and received a good efficiency rating.

The report stated that the Constabulary was effective at preventing and investigating crime and provided appropriate support to victims, delivered positive outcomes for victims and engaged effectively with its communities.

The Chief Finance Officer informed the Panel that requests had been received from two other forces to undertake a peer review. He added that a challenge for the force was how to balance current demand with future demand, as well as meet historic demand, for example, from Operation Seabrook.

Councillor Boyes informed the Panel that the report was a fantastic result for the force and urged Panel Members to ensure it was widely publicised, for example, into Parish Newsletters.

Councillor Jones referred to Operation Seabrook and asked whether any funding would be provided from government to offset the costs of the investigation. The Chief Finance Officer replied that the Prime Minister, during Prime Minister Questions, had said that funding would be provided, but certain criteria would need to be met and there would be a cost ceiling. The costs of the Operation were being closely monitored.

Councillor Armstrong asked whether any income could be generated by the force undertaking the two peer reviews mentioned. The Chief Finance Officer replied that the possibility of this was being investigated,

Mr Cooke informed the Panel that with the role of police officers changing, and in light of funding cuts, this was a commendable Inspection report. He asked what impact on morale future cuts may have and also the impact of longer serving officers, together with their knowledge and experience, leaving the force. The PCC replied that the Inspection report was silent around the issue of funding cuts. The force had employed former police officers on the Operation Seabrook investigation and was to recruit 16 new police officers over the next two years. Collaboration with other forces and blue light services would continue to make efficiency savings.

Resolved:

That the update be noted.

10 Structure of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

The Panel received an update from Alan Reiss, Chief of Staff, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) on the current staffing structure of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. The Chief of Staff circulated an organisation diagram to Panel Members (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Chief of Staff informed the Panel that when he commenced work in the OPCC he had identified some capacity gaps in the office around commissioning and accountability. He had undertaken a review of the capacity, functions and methods of working in the Office and considered that there was insufficient capacity, some of which was due to unclear reporting lines and functions. The Chief of Staff provided the Panel with details of the roles and functions of staff within the OPCC and new ways of working which would result in greater teamwork and accountability, with all staff reporting either directly or indirectly to the Chief of Staff rather than the PCC. More members of OPCC staff had access to the Force systems, and the public face of the PCC was being expanded through the use of social media.

Resolved:

That the update be noted.