

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Police and Crime Panel** held in Committee Room 1A, County Hall, Durham on **Monday 1 February 2016 at 10.00 am**

Present:

Councillor J Allen (Chairman)

Durham County Council:

Councillors P Brookes, S Forster and P May

Darlington Borough Council:

Councillors S Harker (Vice-Chairman) and B Jones

Independent Co-opted Members:

Mr N Cooke and Mr D Dodwell

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Armstrong, Boyes and Hopgood.

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 8 January 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Panel noted that feedback on all issues raised had been provided.

5 Consultation on Council Tax Police Precept 2016-17

The Panel considered a report of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) which provided an update in relation to consultation on his proposed precept for 2016-17, presented a summary of responses received and the expected outcome based on the responses received. A supplemental report was circulated which provided the final results of the Precept Consultation (for copy of report and supplemental report see file of Minutes).

Councillor Brookes informed the Panel that the responses to the consultation provided a clear endorsement of the proposed precept and asked whether it would be possible to quantify the impact of the proposed rise so that the difference the money raised could be advertised.

The PCC replied that the force would lose nearly £460,000 under the Comprehensive Spending Review and along with other budgetary pressures from pay awards, National Insurance contributions and IT requirements, would need to make savings in the order of £3m. Although the proposed precept would mitigate these cuts, the force would still need to reduce officer numbers in the region of 50 police officers and 40 civilian staff. PCSO levels had reduced from 170 to 155 but it was hoped that 15 PCSOs could be recruited to return this number to 170, to retain public visibility.

Mr Dodwell asked whether any reply had been received to the letter the PCC had sent to the Home Office referred to at the last Panel meeting. The PCC replied that while no reply had been received, he had raised the issue of the low yield any precept raised in County Durham and Darlington generated due to 55% of properties being in Council Tax Band A and hoped that this would be considered in any new funding formula. Work was ongoing around a new funding formula and, as Durham had been ranked as the most efficient and effective force in the Country, the PCC had offered input into any work regarding the new funding formula.

Resolved:

That the report be approved.

6 Report of the Rape Scrutiny Panel

The Panel considered a report of the Police and Crime Commissioner which provided an update on work undertaken by the Durham Rape Scrutiny Panel (RSP) (for copy see file of Minutes).

Councillor May asked whether the recommendations from the Panel applied to male victims as well as female. He also sought clarity on the Criming Process referred to in paragraph 5.1 of the RSP report and what an appropriate rank would be, referred to in Recommendation 8.

The PCC replied that, while all victims in the cases examined by the RSP had all been female, the recommendations of the Panel would apply to all victims of domestic violence, regardless of gender. The Criming Process was part of the National Crime Reporting Standard and it was important that any allegation which was later scaled down was subject to a rigorous audit trail and transparency. An appropriate rank officer would vary by situation.

In reply to a question from Councillor Brookes about the number of cases the Panel had scrutinised the PCC replied that this was four, however, it was hoped that more cases would be scrutinised in the future. Councillor Brookes referred to Recommendation 4 which related to retraction statements, an area of concern to him. He asked whether, if a victim issued a retraction statement, but the police felt there was sufficient evidence for a prosecution, the force would take a proactive

role and seek a prosecution. The PCC replied that if the strength of evidence was such that the police considered a prosecution was necessary, the victim could be declared as a hostile witness. The PCC added that he would raise this issue with the force.

Councillor Harker referred to Recommendation 4 and sought clarity around retraction and misinterpretation. The PCC replied that in the past, the decision to prosecute had been made by the police, Crown Prosecution Service and victim. This recommendation sought to bring closer scrutiny of this process to ensure it was full and transparent.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

7 Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Restructure

The Panel considered a report of the Chief of Staff which provided details of a new staffing structure and complement in the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (for copy see file Minutes).

The report was presented by the Chief of Staff, following which all staff of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner left the meeting during the Member discussion.

Councillor Allen asked how the structure compared to other PCC office structures. The PCC replied that although it was similar, no two PCC offices were the same. There was a need to achieve a balanced structure so the office could continue to deliver, as it had done to date. The office now shared the Finance Officer role with the Constabulary, which was nationally recognised as good practice, had recruited two graduate interns and had employed a modern apprentice, as well as having secondees, and this had resulted in a reduction in employee costs in excess of £200,000, from £704,000 to £494,000. The PCC then provided the Panel with details of the Chief of Staff's level of remuneration.

Councillor Brookes informed the Panel he was disappointed with the level of detail in the report with not all salaries and grades being included and no descriptions of roles and responsibilities. Mr Dodwell asked whether the structure had been approved by the PCC alone. The PCC confirmed that he had approved the structure and informed the Panel he would provide the information referred to by Councillor Brookes.

Councillor Allen sought details of the Police Staff Group (PSG) referred to in the report. The PCC replied that as a matter of courtesy he had taken the new structure to the PSG, which had examined the job roles and pay grades, which ensured the process had rigour.

Councillor May asked whether the sharing of jobs had been considered. The PCC replied that the office was a corporation sole, and as such, couldn't collaborate with other organisations, for example, fire and rescue. However, collaboration with other PCC offices had been considered.

Councillor Jones informed the Panel he had been unaware of the PSG and asked whether the office structure had been approved before being brought to the Panel. The PCC replied that the approval of the office structure was not a role of the Panel, which had the role of scrutiny.

Councillor Allen commented that the changes in process, monitoring and governance since the appointment of the Chief of Staff had all been positive.

Mr Dodwell asked how the structure compared to the staffing structure of the former Police Authority. The PCC replied that as the role of the PCC developed, comparisons with the former Police Authority weakened,

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

The Chief of Staff rejoined the meeting.

8 PCC Decision Records

The Panel considered a report of the Chief of Staff which provided an update on the PCCs decision register from January 2016 and forward plan (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:

That the report be noted.