

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Police and Crime Panel** held in Committee Room 1A, County Hall, Durham on **Thursday 3 March 2016 at 1.00 pm**

Present:

Councillor J Allen (Chairman)

Durham County Council:

Councillors J Armstrong, D Boyes, P Brookes, S Forster, A Hopgood and P May

Darlington Borough Council:

Councillors S Harker and B Jones

Independent Co-opted Members:

Mr D K G Dodwell

1 Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Mr N Cooke.

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 1 February 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Panel noted that feedback on issues raised at the previous meeting had been provided. The Chief of Staff referred to Minute No 6 and informed the Panel that a report on the issues raised about the Rape Scrutiny Panel should be completed by next week.

5 Revenue and Capital Budgets 2016/17, Medium Term Financial Plan 2016/17 to 2019/20, Revenue and Capital Budgets 2015/16

The Panel considered a report of the PCC Chief Finance Officer which provided details of the proposed revenue budget and policing precept for 2016/17, the proposed capital budget for 2016/17, the revised revenue and capital budgets for 2015/16 the medium term financial plan for 2016/17 to 2019/20 and the robustness of the estimates and adequacy of reserves (for copy see file of Minutes).

In reply to a question from Councillor S Forster about the 'top sliced' funding streams relating to Counter Terrorism, Firearms and Efficiency the Chief Finance Officer confirmed that Panel Members would be informed when details of allocations for these streams were known.

The Chief Finance officer referred to policing numbers and informed the Panel that Officer numbers would reduce from 1,200 in 2015/16 to 1,150 in 2016/17, however the reductions would not be from frontline or response Officers. It was planned to build Officer numbers back to 1,200 over the coming years. In response to a question from Councillor Forster as to whether the Panel could be reassured this would happen, the Chief Finance Officer informed the Panel that the force would be trying to recruit 80 Officers each year for the next 2 to 3 years. The number of PCSOs would increase from 155 to 170 over the coming year and 30 staff posts would be lost through Early Retirement/ Voluntary Redundancy, with no compulsory redundancies.

Councillor Boyes welcomed the increase in PCSO numbers and asked what the force reserves were as a percentage of budget. The Chief Finance Officer referred the Panel to the table at paragraph 22 of the report which showed reserves at £11.662m, just less than 10% of the Revenue Budget. Although this was lower than other forces, the Chief Finance Officer assured the Panel that he was comfortable with this level of reserves.

In response to a query from Mr Dodwell about the Police Innovation Fund the Chief Finance Officer informed the Panel that this was a fund of £55m to which forces could submit bids around areas of innovation, and was over and above mainstream funding. Durham had not previously received the level of funds from this source which it thought it might, and bids were invited annually, with forces finding out whether they had been successful by the end of March.

Councillor Hopgood asked whether the increase in the minimum wage would have any impact of the force budget. The Chief Finance Officer replied that although the minimum paid police staff were already above this level, it could have an impact on some contracts the force had.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

6 Community Safety Funding in 2016/17

The Panel considered a report of the Head of Governance and Commissioning which provided an update on the PCCs planned community safety funding activities for 2018/17 (for copy see file of Minutes).

Councillor Armstrong referred to the variety of projects which had been supported during 2015/16 and asked whether any report was available of what the projects had achieved. The Chief of Staff replied that such reports would be available but added that the projects were still delivering their programmes. Councillor Boyes added that the projects seemed to be very worthy causes but asked whether it was known what the funding was for and the results it had achieved, The Chief of Staff replied that he would circulate a more detailed note on this to Panel Members.

Councillor Allen informed the Panel that the County Durham Community Foundation always required evaluation of projects which received funding.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

7 Quarter 3 Performance

The Panel received a presentation from the Police and Crime Commissioner which provided details of the Quarter 3 Public Performance, including the following:

- Aspire confidence/community engagement – engagement had taken place with rural communities and a draft rural strategy had been produced;
- Support to victims – a new victim support service would commence on 1 April 2016 to ensure victims received a bespoke service which met their needs;
- Violence against women and girls – a TV link had been installed at Meadowfield which provided a comfortable environment for giving evidence and linked into No 2 Court at Durham;
- Hate crime – there had been a 7.8% reduction which equated to approximately 3 incidents a month;
- Road safety – all collisions had reduced by 14%, although the figures for killed and seriously injured had risen, with no clear reason why. Speeding was a key cause of accidents.
- Public confidence in the police had risen by 2%
- Victim based crime had increased by 4.6%. There was a new method of recording harassment and as a result the PCC was expecting this figure to increase 10% over a 12 month period.
- While there had been an increase in burglary and sexual offences, burglary figures and general crime figures in County Durham and Darlington were well below the national average. Petty arson was being closely examined.
- Hyperlinks had been added to the performance pages on the website to enhance site navigation.

Councillor Boyes asked how Durham compared itself to other forces both regionally and nationally and whether Durham was compared to like-sized forces. The PCC replied that Durham was in a group of more similar forces and could provide performance figures for these forces and for neighbouring forces. Crime levels in Northumberland and Cleveland were significantly higher than in Durham.

Councillor May referred to austerity and the impact on Council services, particularly reductions in Children and Young People's staff which may result in more young people being on the streets. He asked whether the PCC had been involved in any discussions around this issue. The PCC confirmed that he had been involved in discussions and had considered the impact of such cuts to provide mitigation.

Councillor Forster referred to the national rise in acid attacks and asked whether the Durham force had dealt with any such attacks. The Chief of Staff replied that the Home Office had recently requested this information and it was found that none had been reported in the Durham force area.

Councillor May referred to the ongoing improvement works to the A1(M) at Scotch Corner which would eventually result in three-lanes going into two and asked whether anything had been discussed to ensure this was a decent transition. The PCC replied that he had not been involved in any discussions about this adding that any safe transition would require effective signage.

8 Recent HMIC Inspection Reports

The Panel considered a report of the Police and Crime Commissioner which provided details of the findings of recent assessments by HMIC Inspectorate of Constabulary into Police legitimacy and Police effectiveness (for copy see file of Minutes).

Councillor Armstrong informed the Panel that this was an excellent report. He referred to the figures for Stop and Search for the force, which were nearly double the average of Durham's 'most similar group' of forces and asked whether this had any positive impact. He also referred to every reported crime being attended, which was something the force should be proud of.

The PCC replied that Stop and Search should be carried out ethically, proportionately and fairly and HMIC had confirmed that this was being carried out ethically within Durham. Durham would continue to attend every reported crime because this was important contact with the community.

Mr Dodwell informed the Panel that a press release about the inspections which was presented to a PACT meeting he had attended was positively received.

Councillor Boyes informed the Panel that there had been a lot of stigma attached to the use of Stop and Search in London in the early 1980's. However, as long as Stop and Search was being carried out in an open and transparent manner he could see no problem with its use.

Councillor Boyes referred to the assessment which reported there was more to do in recording and publishing outcomes online and explaining how powers were being used following a community complaint and asked how this was being addressed. The PCC replied that community triggers under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act were not being used very much, but the force was working on this.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

9 PCC Decision Records

The Panel noted a report of the Chief of Staff which provided an update on the PCCs decision register since the last meeting and forward plan (for copy see file of Minutes).

10 New Policing and Crime Bill

The Panel considered a report of the Police and Crime Commissioner which provided a summary of the Policing and Crime Bill, including the key policies and what they entailed (for copy see file of Minutes).

Councillor Armstrong informed the Panel that a lot had been achieved in the area of collaboration and requested that an update on collaboration be provided. He referred to paragraph 19 on page 58 regarding the ability of the Home Secretary to change the name of a police force area outside of London by regulations and sought clarity on this. The PCC replied that he could not understand the reasoning behind this part of the legislation. Councillor Harker informed the Panel that a previous issue had arisen where an Act of Parliament was required when a force wanted to change its name, which had been a reason Durham Constabulary had not changed to County Durham and Darlington Constabulary upon Local Government Reorganisation in 1997.

Mr Dodwell referred to the first bullet point under paragraph 2 on page 53, about enhancing local accountability of the fire and rescue service by enabling directly elected PCCs to take over the governance from Fire and Rescue Authorities where a local case was made. He asked who would make such a case, and if the PCC did not, would a case be made by another body. He considered this to be weak legislation.

The PCC replied that PCCs would have to be enacted in the process and make a strong case for such a move, adding that he would not support such a case.

Councillor Forster referred to the stopping of the detention of children and young people under 18 in police cells who were experiencing a mental health crisis and asked what currently happened in such cases. The PCC replied that the force had a Mental Health Concordat which made places available for such young people at one of two facilities.

Councillor Boyes asked whether, while there was no appetite on the part of the County Council for the governance of the fire and rescue service to be taken over by the PCC, this could change in the event of a directly elected mayor under devolution. The PCC replied that two parties needed to agree any change, one of which was the PCC.

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 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

12 Vysionics Average Speed

The Panel considered a report of the Police and Crime Commissioner which provided a progress update around the feasibility of introducing average speed cameras in County Durham and Darlington (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:

That the report be noted and that Panel Members be informed of further progress and developments.