

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Police and Crime Panel** held in Committee Room 1A, County Hall, Durham on **Thursday 2 February 2017 at 10.00 am**

Present:

Councillor J Allen (Chairman)

Durham County Council:

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

Darlington Borough Council:

Councillors S Harker (Vice-Chairman) and B Jones

Independent Co-opted Members:

Mr N J H Cooke and Mr D K G Dodwell

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Forster and May.

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 5 January 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following:

- Minute No 2, paragraph 2 – the figure at the end of the paragraph should read £5 rather than 35;
- Minute No. 2, paragraph 7 - the PCVC informed the Panel he had provided an incorrect figure regarding the level of response to previous precept consultations. This should have been in the low hundreds rather than in the low thousands.
- Minute No. 6, paragraph 4 – should read ‘While a serving Assistant Chief Constable’ and not ‘While a serving Deputy Chief Constable’
- Minute No. 11, paragraph 3 – the Professional Standards Board was chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable and not the Chief Constable.

Mr Dodwell referred to the forthcoming increase in fine and penalty points for motorists using a mobile phone while driving. This had been raised at a PACT meeting and people had been unaware that PCSOs did not have the power to stop such motorists and issue tickets.

The PCVC replied that the powers of PCSOs in the Durham force had been optimised. In reply to a question from Councillor Boyes about discretion at a force level to increase PCSO powers the PCVC informed the Panel that while there was such discretion, the powers of PCSOs in Durham were at the limits of these parameters.

The PCVC informed the Panel that following the last meeting a paper had been circulated to Members regarding burglaries, which showed there was no evidence that the Council's new street lighting policy was a cause of increased numbers of burglaries.

The PCVC referred to Minute No. 11 and informed the Panel that his office had checked the number of cases referred to by Councillor Brookes. There had been 4 such cases in the Durham force since 2014 and none of the officers were now serving in the force.

5 Consultation on Council Tax Police Precept 2017-18

The Panel considered a report of the Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner which provided an update in relation to the consultation on his proposal for the policing element of the Council Tax Precept for 2017-18, presented a summary of the responses at the time of despatch of the report and the expected outcome on the feedback received. The PCVC also presented to the Panel details of the completed consultation which closed at midnight on 29 January 2017 (for report and copy of presentation see file of Minutes).

The PCVC informed the Panel that 324 responses had been received, a figure which he found disappointing. 77% of respondents supported the proposed 1.98% increase and 23% supported the precept remaining at the current level. The PCVC presentation provided details of the responses by age group and place and the PCVC informed the Panel that this information would be used for future consultations to identify where more engagement was needed.

Councillor Brookes asked whether the consultation had been carried out online or by hard copy. The PCVC replied that both online and hard copy consultation was carried out, with the majority of responses being online. The strategy of consulting with AAPs was to be reviewed because it was not possible to attend all AAPs and some did not meet during the consultation period.

Councillor Allen informed the Panel that the PCVC had uploaded a video to Facebook to encourage participation in the consultation. Councillor Allen suggested a way of boosting future participation could be to run it alongside a competition for participants.

Councillor Boyes agreed that 324 responses was a disappointing number and asked whether, given the numbers, it could be considered to be a valid consultation. The PCVC replied that it would not be considered to be statistically significant.

Councillor Boyes informed the Panel that he considered the PCVC had done all he could to encourage participation in the consultation. There was a need for the proposed 1.98% rise in precept to maintain the service of Durham Constabulary. Councillor Boyes **moved** that the Panel agree the 1.98% precept rise. This was **seconded** by Councillor Armstrong.

Councillor Hopgood agreed with the proposed 1.98% precept increase. She added that given the low number of consultation responses percentages could be misleading and requested that in future numbers were given. The PCVC replied that both numbers and percentages should be given.

Resolved:

- (i) That the consultation returns be noted
- (ii) That the proposed 1.98% precept increase be agreed

6 Road Safety

The Panel received a presentation from the Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner on Road Safety (for copy of slides see file of Minutes).

The presentation from the PCVC explained that road policing was managed by Cleveland and Durham Specialist Operations Unit which was working towards reducing the Fatal 4 causes of Fatal and Serious Injury collisions on the roads of Cleveland and Durham by using the 3 Es of Education, Enforcement and Engineering.

Councillor Jones referred to the Speed Awareness course which was offered as an alternative to a speeding fine and penalty points and asked whether offenders paid for such courses. The PCVC replied that the costs of the course were met by fines and was at no cost to the force.

Councillor Allen thanked the PCVC for his presentation, which she found to be very interesting. She asked whether any research had been carried out on circumstances which led to accidents and behaviour before an accident happened. Councillor Allen informed the Panel that she had attended Wisedrive which included a background of what led people to get into a car and gave some insight to behaviours before an accident. The PCVC replied that the contributory factors to accidents was analysed.

Councillor Boyes informed the Panel that he too had attended a Wisedrive event which he had found to be hard-hitting and to have the desired effect on attendees. However, a number of schools did not attend the event either because of curriculum problems or because of pupil behaviour issues and this was very disappointing. Councillor Boyes informed the Panel that he considered Wisedrive to be a 'skills for life' event and should be mandatory for under-16 year olds.

Councillor Boyes referred to the problem of drivers using their mobile phones while driving and also to the problem of drivers speeding in 30 m.p.h. areas and informed the PCVC that laws relating to these were only observed if people saw them being enforced. He added that he had not seen many mobile speed cameras deployed in areas where he had observed speeding taking place.

The PCVC replied that he too was disappointed with the take up of attendance by schools at Wisedrive. Indeed, he had written to every school after a previous Wisedrive event to encourage attendance but unfortunately attendance at the following event was lower.

Referring to enforcement the PCVC informed the Panel a review of the deployment of mobile speed cameras was being undertaken and such deployment needed to be more intelligence-led. Government proposals to increase fines for speeding in a 30 m.p.h. area to a maximum of £1,000 and to £2,500 on a motorway should be the other way around, with the maximum sanction applying to a 30 m.p.h. area. The PCVC informed the Panel that he had advocated tougher sanctions for the offence of death by dangerous driving, which he considered should be in the same category as manslaughter.

Councillor Allen referred to attendance by schools at Wisedrive and suggested that a joint letter from the Panel and the PCVC be sent to school governors to make them aware of the event. Councillor Allen also asked whether a later session could be staged to allow greater flexibility for attendance. The PCVC welcomed the opportunity for a joint letter to be sent to school governors but informed the Panel that a later session could not be staged because it was a full-day event.

Councillor Brookes asked whether the figures in the presentation for collisions in which people were killed or seriously injured included cyclists. The PCVC replied that cyclists were included in these figures but he was unaware of the breakdown of the figures.

Councillor Brookes informed the Panel that cyclists received a lot of general abuse from motorists, who considered that cyclists had no right to be on the road. Motorists were unaware that cyclists were allowed and encouraged to ride side by side so that a motorist then had to make a conscious decision before overtaking. Horse riders were given more respect on roads than cyclists because horses could cause damage to vehicles. There was also a problem of motorists parking on dedicated cycle routes and motorists needed to be better educated about cyclists and be more tolerant of them. Road users on the continent gave cyclists more respect and there was a need to build a smarter cycle infrastructure. Children should be encouraged to cycle to school locally through safe cycle schemes which in turn would help to solve the problem of parking outside of schools at peak times.

The PCVC informed Councillor Brookes that he would discuss this with him outside of the meeting to take some issues forward.

Councillor Hopgood asked the PCVC if he would add support to any lobby of Government to make the wearing of helmets compulsory for cyclists. The PCVC replied that he would be happy to lobby for this and suggested he could do this alongside cycling organisations.

Councillor Hopgood informed the Panel of the need to consider child pedestrian training due to the increase in number of children and young people using mobile phones and wearing headphones as pedestrians which made them less aware of their surroundings.

The Director of Transformation and Partnerships suggested that the take up of Wisedrive by schools be raised with Margaret Whellans, Director of Children and Young People's Services and brought into the Schools Forum. Councillor Harker added that school governors in Darlington could be written to but he considered non-attendance was likely to be due to curriculum time pressures.

Councillor Jones asked whether Wisedrive had been to Darlington and that Panel Members be informed when the event was being held. The PCVC replied that the event was held every year at the Excel Centre at Newton Aycliffe. Councillor Allen requested that following the County Council elections in May 2017 Panel Members be notified of the date of the next Wisedrive event.

Referring to enforcement work Councillor Jones informed the PCVC that he considered unmarked police cars to be very effective and suggested that more of these be used. The PCVC replied that he supported the use of unmarked cars.

Mr Cooke suggested that teachers training days could be a good time to stage a Wisedrive event.

Mr Dodwell referred to speeding in villages and asked how many road traffic fatalities had occurred in 30 m.p.h. areas. The PCVC replied that the number of fatalities in built up areas was small, with the majority happening on the A66 or A19. There were not many on the A1(M).

The Director of Transformation and Partnerships informed the Panel a Scrutiny Review of 30 m.p.h. areas had found that most fatalities occurred on 60 m.p.h. roads.

The PCVC informed the Panel that the accident statistics could be broken down to show where fatalities and serious accidents happened. He agreed to circulate this information after the meeting as well as details of work undertaken around the causes of accidents.

Councillor Harker informed the Panel that the police were often criticised for the use of speed enforcement cameras which had been described as 'cash cows' but there was never a discussion about how much the police spent on road safety. The PCVC replied that he was looking at his media strategy for this and added that the cost of a fatal road traffic accident was in the region of £1m.

Councillor Allen informed the Panel that the presentation and ensuing robust discussion had been useful and had highlighted the partnership approach to the issue of Road Safety, including Overview and Scrutiny and the Safe Durham Partnership, with Members of both also being Members of the Panel.

The Chairman of the meeting was of the opinion that the following item of business was of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration because of a recent newspaper article on the subject.

7 Durham University

Mr Cooke referred the Panel to a recent newspaper article regarding alleged inappropriate behaviour which had taken place at Durham University.

The PCVC informed the Panel that he had met students and officers from the University and was of the opinion that the issue was being taken very seriously by the University.