

County Council Meeting – 28 April 2009

To: SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

Date: 28 April 2009

By: Sue Martin, Chief Executive of Surrey Police Authority

Title: REPORT FROM SURREY POLICE AUTHORITY

Purpose of Report/Issue:

To inform Members of the work of Surrey Police Authority since the last Council meeting in March 2009.

“Capping” of Surrey Police Authority

The Authority was notified on 26 March by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) that the Secretary of State has concluded that the Authority’s budget requirement for 2009-10 could be considered ‘excessive’. The Authority has therefore, for the second year running, been ‘designated’ under the Local Government Finance Act 1992. Despite repeated attempts to engage with DCLG since last year’s decision, the first the Authority heard of the Minister’s decision was via the local media.

Designation means that a process has been initiated that may lead either to the Secretary of State setting a maximum budget requirement for the Authority for 2009-10 (capping) or to nomination. If the Authority was to be ‘capped’ it would see a reduction in budget of around £1.6m in 2009/10, in addition to re-billing costs of an estimated £1.4million.

As in previous years, the Authority undertook a rigorous budget setting process, in the context of a three-year strategy, to fulfil its duty to ensure an efficient and effective police service for the people of Surrey. As Members know, difficult decisions have already been taken this year. Funding has been withdrawn from partnership initiatives, the number of Basic Command Units reduced from four to three and a comprehensive review of back office functions undertaken. An extensive redundancy programme which will see a reduction in headcount of 144 is underway. Our ‘Surrey Public First’ approach has seen a reduction in bureaucracy and a saving of 1,500 hours in police time as officers are increasingly encouraged to use their discretion. In setting this year’s budget, the Authority was fully aware that further savings could not be made without impacting on the frontline.

The Authority has repeatedly raised its concerns with the Government over the perversities of the funding formula which this year saw the Force receive a grant increase of 2.5% compared to almost 4% in other parts of the country. The county continues to make the highest net contribution per capita to the UK Exchequer but pays well above the national average for its policing with almost

50% being funded through the council tax precept compared to just 25% elsewhere in the country. In real terms, Surrey has seen a 24% reduction in Government funding over the last decade.

In order to address increasing criminal threats and to maintain the standards of policing in Surrey that residents deserve, the Authority set a budget increase of 4.82% in 2009/2010 this year compared with last year. We continue to believe that this is the minimum budget needed to meet the challenges in Surrey.

We have until 15 April to appeal against the nomination for capping by DCLG. We are considering our response and more information will be available at the Council's meeting.

Local Policing Plan for 2009-12

At its meeting on 30 March, the Authority endorsed the direction of the Local Policing Plan and the headline priorities for 2009-12, which has been drawn up in consultation with the Force, 300 key stakeholders and over 1,800 local residents. The Authority has decided not to publish the finalised plan including numerical targets until the capping issue has been resolved and the final budget for the year established.

The Plan retains the key priorities agreed last year, which were shown to be supported by local people. In addition, as a result of the findings of our consultations, the Police's response to serious acquisitive crime (such a burglary; theft of or from vehicles; and robbery) is to be strengthened, and the issue of antisocial driving added as a key area of activity in the forthcoming year. A draft of the plan is available on the Authority's website.

Recruitment of a Deputy Chief Constable

Now that Mark Rowley has been appointed as the substantive Chief Constable, plans are in hand to recruit a substantive Deputy Chief Constable. Interviews are scheduled for early May. T/DCC Lynne Owens will be leaving Surrey Police at the end of April to take up a post as Deputy Assistant Commissioner in the Metropolitan Police Service. The Authority is therefore also advertising for a substantive Assistant Chief Constable. Interviews for this post will be held at the end of May.

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