

County Council Meeting – 15 June 2010

To: SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL
Date: 15 June 2010
By: Alison Bolton, Acting 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 May 2010.

New Police Authority Member

The Police Authority welcomed Yvonna Lay to her first meeting of the full Authority on 20th May following the Council's annual appointments.

Operational Policing Review (OPR) Update

June sees the start of the Force's consultation events to determine where the public wants to access policing services on a local level. As part of the Operational Policing Review, some older, under-used yet expensive police buildings will be replaced with better ways for the public to access their neighbourhood teams. Savings made by the closure of these costly police stations and their replacement with more convenient locations, will contribute to the Force being able to recruit up to 200 extra police constables.

Retaining old police buildings across the force costs £2.4 million a year with an average cost of £82 per visit – the equivalent of three hours of a police officer's time. In comparison, the vast majority of residents contact Surrey Police by telephone with 2,629 calls received on average per day at a total running cost to the force of £7 per call. Under the proposed changes to our buildings, we are looking to save the cash equivalent of £52 million over the next ten years. The Police Authority's own consultation showed that, given the choice between more front line officers and keeping current police stations, the majority of respondents choose the former. The Authority has been clear that no police buildings will be closed until a range of meeting places have been set up in their place.

The Force's consultation offers a range of opportunities for people to feed in their views. More details of the consultation and the proposed impact on each area can be found on the Force's website www.surrey.police.uk/surrey_public_first.

End of Year Performance Results

At its meeting on 20th May, the Authority received the end of year results setting out how the Force has performed against the Local Policing Plan targets for 2009-10. Members were pleased to hear that eight of the nine targets were achieved. Only the target for public satisfaction was not met, although performance of 80% against a target of 83% is still commendable. Highlights

included high levels of public confidence, with an end of year result of 85.3%, notably exceeding the target of 80%. Public confidence for all eleven boroughs has improved compared to their 2008/09 performance.

During the year, the Force charged or cautioned 167 persons for the Supply of Class A Drugs - markedly higher than the target of 135 - by running a number of high profile test purchase operations. In addition, ten Organised Criminal Groups (OCGs) were disrupted or dismantled. Specific mention should be made to the crime reduction recorded by the Force in 2009-2010. In July 2009 the Force was recording an 11.2% year on year increase in recorded crime. As a result, a number of control measures were implemented. By effective identification of crime trends, the targeting of specific offenders and joint crime reduction initiatives, significant reductions were realised during the middle and latter part of the financial year. Consequently, by the end of the year, the Force achieved a year on year reduction of 3.8% on the already low levels of crimes recorded in 2008-2009.

In terms of efficiency savings, a further 3.5% cashable savings have been realised, equating to £6.6m. The unplanned wastage turnover rate for officers and staff of 4.97% is low against the target of 8.5%. This performance is particularly exceptionally considering the introduction of the Organisational Police Review (OPR) in the autumn.

The one headline target the Force is not going to achieve is customer satisfaction. Performance currently stands at 80% of the public satisfied with overall service against a target of 83.9%. The beginning of the financial year was largely affected by the severe weather conditions in February which caused an increase in call volumes and difficulty in staffing levels available to cope with the demand. This also caused a knock-on effect, impacting on the Force's ability to keep people informed in a timely manner (a key driver for overall satisfaction). The Force has now put in place appropriate business continuity arrangements providing suitable resilience during adverse weather conditions.

Research indicates that the levels of satisfaction vary between different victim groups and there has been a statistically significant reduction for victims of violent crime. As a result the Force has created a 'violent crime working group'. So far the group has identified that keeping victims informed remains the key issue and has reinforced the need to provide quality updates on the progress of investigations, and for those victims where their investigation is filed as 'No Further Action' to be offered neighbourhood team reassurance visits.

Workforce Modernisation – Surrey Police in the News

The issue of the increased use of police staff – or 'Workforce Modernisation' (WFM), as it is known - was a key theme at the recent Police Federation Conference and one which generated significant media interest. A report published by the Federation was highly critical of Surrey Police for its approach to WFM and its high police staff to police officer ratio, something which the Federation saw as a threat to the Force's resilience. The report also criticised detection rates and linked this erroneously to WFM.

Both the Force and the Authority have vigorously defended Surrey's approach to WFM. At a recent meeting of the Authority, the Chief Constable highlighted the breadth of valuable work undertaken by police staff in support of police officers. The Federation's inference is that police staff are 'pen pushers'. This not only undermines the work undertaken by support staff who have seen substantial cuts to their departments in recent years, it also overlooks the fact that the vast majority of staff are in operational service delivery posts. Examples include financial investigators who play a key role in the recovery of criminal assets; the 277 PCSOs who work within our Neighbourhood Teams; 80 forensic staff; and over 200 call handlers who respond to emergency and non-emergency calls. Members will be well aware of the financial challenges the Force has faced in recent years. When it is considered that a police constable costs around £40k a year to a PCSO's £26k, the Surrey approach illustrates how we have been able to build extra capacity within a limited budget.

In terms of detection rates, the Federation Report overlooks our 'Surrey Public First' strategy which has involved giving more discretion to officers to resolve local matters without pressure to give out fixed penalties and cautions like confetti to hit quotas. In our Policing Plan we are counting these as successfully resolved incidents, but they do not satisfy national definitions for detection rates and thus we do have a low rate of detections for 'all crime'. Ironically this discretion approach is strongly supported by the Federation.

Surrey's own personnel – both staff and officers - have also been quick to defend the WFM model. They have reported better working practices, improved victim contact and greater job satisfaction in the WFM set up. Independent analysis of the Surrey Workforce Demonstration Site Programme by Deloitte has also recently concluded that WFM has led to improvements in performance and satisfaction and that Surrey has been able to make 'substantial financial savings in a sustainable fashion'. On this basis, both the Force and the Authority will continue to robustly support our WFM principles.

The Queen's Speech – Police Accountability and Budgetary Impact

At the time of writing, we know that the Government will introduce a Police and Social Responsibility Bill, intended to make the police service more accountable to local people. One of the main benefits cited is, 'increased police accountability through directly elected individuals'. We await further details of how this will work in practice and likely timescales. We are already exploring the impact of a freeze on precept and the 1.46% cut in police grant, imposed this week, on the service.

Contact details –

Name:	Alison Bolton
Job Title:	Acting Chief Executive
Telephone number:	01483 630200
Email address:	bolton11786@surrey.pnn.police.uk
