

County Council Meeting – 14 December 2010

**To: SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Date: 14 December 2010**

**By: Alison Bolton, Chief Executive of Surrey Police Authority**

**Title: REPORT FROM SURREY POLICE AUTHORITY**

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**Purpose of Report/Issue:**

To inform Members of the work of Surrey Police Authority since the last Council meeting in October 2010.

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**Comprehensive Spending Review – the Impact on Surrey Police**

On 20 October, details of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) were published. The impact of the CSR on police funding nationally is that a 20% real terms cut to core Government Grant funding will be phased over the next four years in reductions of 6%, 8%, 4% and 4%. In actual cash terms, this will see the current Police Grant reduce by 4%, 6%, 2% and 1%. However, the Chancellor has announced that the Government will provide a grant of 2.5% (for four years) of an Authority's tax base if the Authority declares a zero increase Council Tax precept in 2011/12 and then follows the Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) forecasts for increasing precept by 3.4% in each of the following three years of the CSR time period. This brings the real cut to police funding to 14% in total.

The reductions in funding represent a considerable financial challenge to Surrey Police Authority, as an additional £3.5million of savings have to be found over four years on top of the already-projected savings target of £36.9million. The Force has already made significant changes to its processes and structures in order to make savings and protect the front-line as far as is possible.

At its most recent public meeting, the Authority discussed a number of measures which will offer further protection to the front-line in an increasingly harsh financial climate. These include a substantial review of police staff leadership and the use of Regulation A19 for police officers. This means those officers of Inspector rank and above who have reached 30 years' service will be required to retire on the grounds of efficiency of the Force, with some exceptions for operational necessity. Invoking this Regulation is the only option available to reduce police officer resources as officers cannot be made redundant. Clearly this has proven an extremely difficult decision to make, given the skills and experience these officers bring to the Force.

The Authority awaits the outcome of the final CSR settlement for Surrey and is working with Surrey MPs in the interim to ensure that any decisions on the distribution of police grant are as favourable to the County as possible.

## **The Operational Policing Review**

Since the last meeting of the Council, the second phase of consultation to establish where local people want to meet with their Neighbourhood Teams has been completed. These results, from Mole Valley, Reigate & Banstead, Epsom & Ewell and Runnymede, have provided very similar results to the first phase consultation and show overwhelming statistical support in favour of meeting local officers in places and at times that best support the life patterns of local residents. Footfall surveys of visitors to police station front counters also support the argument that few local people meet with local officers at local police stations. The third and final phase of consultation in Elmbridge, Tandridge and Waverley is currently underway.

There have, of course, been small groups of individuals resistant to the closure of some police stations who have used the consultation to voice their opposition. There is still some public misconception of how we police our communities which fuels much of this resistance. Experience from the consultation to date suggests that, once people understand how the Force works, negativity tends to subside. The Force will continue to consider how to increase public awareness of how policing services are delivered.

Members of the Authority have recently agreed to dispose of seven old and expensive to run buildings now that space in co-located buildings has been found. Police buildings in Ripley, Ash, Sunbury, Lightwater, Frimley and Byfleet will now be put on the market, subject to final approval by the Authority at a later date. Closures will not take place until alternative neighbourhood bases have been secured and teams re-located.

## **Force Performance Update**

The Police Authority has recently received the latest performance information from Surrey Police, setting out progress against the Local Policing Plan for 2010/11. At their last meeting, Members considered the impact of the in-year cuts imposed by the Government on Surrey's policing budget which amounted to £1.6m. In light of this and the resulting reduction in resource, the Authority has recognised that it may prove extremely difficult for the Force to meet some of the ambitious targets set back in March.

Members also agreed that a measure regarding public confidence in how the police and local councils are dealing with anti-social behaviour and crime will be removed from this year's plan. This particular measure had been included as the previous Government had set it as a national target and it was also part of the Local Area Agreement. Given that single national targets and the LAA have now been scrapped and that partners are facing major resource cuts, Members were of the view that this target no longer be reported. Although the target has gone, joint activity such as Operation Quake and Drive Smart will carry on and the Force will continue to focus its efforts on improving its response to anti-social behaviour.

In terms of performance, the Authority is very aware that the targets it has set are challenging at the best of times, but with increasingly limited resources, are

becoming even more so. It is therefore particularly pleasing to report that during the second quarter, 88.6% of the public surveyed had confidence in the police in their neighbourhood – comfortably above the target of 80%. Satisfaction levels in the service provided for victims of serious crime and road traffic collisions is also notably higher than the Policing Plan target.

Nine organised criminal groups have been disrupted or dismantled to date this year and 73 people have been charged or cautioned with the supply of Class A drugs against a very challenging target of 170. Year-on-year reductions in serious and violent crime stand at 2.4%, which is slightly below the target. Detection rates are also slightly below target at 16.7% against a target of 18.6% and the Force is closely monitoring progress in this area.

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