

County Council Meeting – 8 February 2011

To: SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

Date: 8 February 2011

By: Alison Bolton, 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 December 2010.

Budget Setting for Surrey Police

The Police Authority will meet on 7 February 2011 to consider the proposed Surrey Police revenue budget and precept for 2011/12, compiled following a series of meetings with Members which began back in September.

The amount that Surrey Police Authority will receive under the national police funding formula has been reduced by 4.8% for 2011/12 and a further 6.4% for 2012/13. At the time of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), the Government announced that it wished to work with local authorities to implement a council tax freeze in England in 2011/12. This means that if the Authority sets a zero precept increase for the coming year, it will be entitled to a Council Tax Grant which amounts to the equivalent of a 2.5% increase in precept. The Authority could decide to set a higher precept figure, but any increase would have to exceed 2.5% to achieve any net increase in funding and would expose the Authority to the risk that the Government might take capping action.

The proposed budget to be put to the Authority relies on extremely significant cost improvement and efficiency savings of over £13million being achieved during the financial year. These represent a substantial management and operational challenge for Surrey Police. The Force has undergone a comprehensive review of its business support and senior staff structures in recent months, as well as changes to the structure and delivery of operational policing. In addition to finding savings to address the gap between the budget and available funding, the planned savings programme will provide sufficient excess to finance up to an additional 200 frontline police officers. This has been the Authority and Force's ambition since the inception of the Operational Policing Review in late 2009.

Full details of the budget will be published on the Authority's website in advance of the meeting and a verbal update will be available at the Council meeting.

Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill

The Bill, which will bring about the abolition of police authorities to be replaced by directly elected Police and Crime Commissioners, has now started its passage

through Parliament. The House of Commons debated the main principles of the Bill at its first reading on 13 December. The Commons decided that the Bill should be given its Second Reading and sent it to a Public Bill Committee for scrutiny. The Public Bill Committee met for the first time on 18 January and will complete its consideration by 17 February.

Following discussions on the proposals with Authority Members, a response to the Bill has been submitted to the Bill Committee. The submission concentrated on a number of key concerns, notably: the considerable costs of introducing Commissioners; the importance of finding a balance between empowering a Commissioner but ensuring the continued operational independence of the Chief Constable; concerns that a criminal background will not be a bar to a candidate applying to be Commissioner; and the capacity of an individual to undertake an extremely powerful and diverse role.

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