

County Council Meeting – 22 March 2011

To: SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

Date: 22 March 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 February 2011.

Budget Setting for Surrey Police

The Authority met on 7 February 2011 to set the revenue budget and precept for Surrey Police for 2011/12. The gross budget of £213.2m represents a reduction of £2.6m from the original 2010/11 gross budget of £215.8m. The Government share of funding has fallen by 4.8% this year as part of a projected 20% cut in police funding over the next four years. The Authority agreed to freeze the police element of council tax in line with the Government's national initiative. This means that a Band D household will continue to pay £198.54 for policing for the year.

The proposed budget relies on cost improvements and efficiency savings of £13.2 million during the financial year ahead. This will be a substantial management and operational challenge for Surrey Police. The principal areas of activity that will generate these savings are a review of business support arrangements, changes in the structure and delivery of policing as part of the Operational Policing Review and operational development changes, including collaboration.

In addition to addressing the gap between the budget and available funding, the planned savings are expected to provide sufficient excess to finance up to an additional 200 front-line police officers.

Operational Policing Review

The Authority has now received the results of the final phase of consultation which asked residents in Waverley, Elmbridge and Tandridge where they would like to access their Neighbourhood Policing Teams following the closure of some of Surrey's smaller police stations. Generally, the public appears supportive of putting more officers on the streets, at the expense of some local stations. With the introduction of neighbourhood policing, it has become evident that people seldom engage with their local officers at police stations, preferring other places that were not considered when the policing estate was acquired.

The changes to police estate which form part of the Operational Policing Review have now moved from the planning stage to implementation and a number of elements of the review programme are now coming together. This includes the

marketing of the first group of police stations in Sunbury, Lingfield, Frimley, Byfleet, Ash, Ripley and Lightwater following Authority approval in late 2010. More progress has been made on co-locating Neighbourhood Teams with borough and district council colleagues and officers are now co-located in Woking, Runnymede, Guildford, Surrey Heath, Spelthorne, Reigate & Banstead and partly at Waverley. Plans are at an advanced stage for the remaining four boroughs and districts and the benefits are becoming more apparent as each team moves in, with better communication and joint problem solving of local community safety issues.

The Authority has made a commitment that no police station will close until alternative provision is in place for people to meet with their Neighbourhood Teams at a local level. Public consultation has shown overwhelmingly that people want to engage with local officers when they are out on patrol or in other community buildings. The Force is currently reviewing and refreshing the many sites across the county that can be used to host panel or beat meetings, surgeries, drop-ins or other police meetings. It is also setting up a range of 'police posts' which will predominantly be places from which officers can patrol, but some of which will also have opportunities for community engagement, such as the newly-opened Lingfield and Dormansland Community Centre. There remain tight budget constraints around this aspect of the estate strategy in order to meet the original investment appraisal.

It has always been part of the review plan to reduce the number of front counters across the force, based on data around disproportionate costs and under-use. The 'transactional services' available at front counters are simply not used in sufficient volumes for Surrey Police to justify the retention of the current set-up. Counters will be co-located in district and borough offices, providing a one-stop service to the public. The exceptions will be Reigate, Guildford and Staines where there are custody facilities and counters will remain. From June 2011, a new mobile counter provision will serve those more rural areas that will see their counters close or where services have not previously been provided. There are significant revenue savings in this aspect of the plan, but it will not affect engagement with local Neighbourhood Teams nor the 'response' side of the Force's business.

The Operational Policing Review has always been seen by the Authority as a package of measures to help secure the financial stability of the Force and preserve the front-line in times of financial constraint. Ultimately, the intention remains to put up to 200 additional officers onto the front-line, increasing the number of constables from 1,345 (as at March 2010) to 1,545. Surrey Police has so far recruited almost half of the new PCs and current projections put the Force on track to reach the 200 target by the end of 2011.

Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill

In depth scrutiny of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill, which will bring about the abolition of police authorities in May 2012 to be replaced by elected Police and Crime Commissioners, has been completed by the Commons Committee. The Bill will now be debated in the Commons Chamber.

A number of amendments have been made during the Committee stage. These include the strengthening of disqualification requirements for potential Commissioners to prohibit any candidates who have been convicted of an imprisonable offence. The Government has also indicated its commitment to developing a 'Memorandum of Understanding' which will define the 'operational independence' that Chief Constables are keen to preserve in any new governance structure.

Police Performance

During the first three quarters of the year, the Force has made some notable progress against the Local Policing Plan targets set by the Authority for 2011-12. High levels of customer satisfaction have been maintained, with 85% of victims of serious crime or road traffic collisions being satisfied with the service they receive. This is a statistically significant improvement on the end of year result for 2009/10 of 80.7%. Public confidence in Surrey Police remains high with 87.5% of people surveyed this financial year confident in their neighbourhood police, compared to 85.3% in 2009/2010.

Twelve Organised Criminal Groups have been disrupted or dismantled to date this year and the Force is confident that it will meet the end of year target of 15. The Force is also on course to achieve the targets set for cashable savings and unplanned staff and officer wastage.

Current levels of performance represent a significant achievement in light of the economic environment. However, there remain four areas of risk against target for the Force.

A total of 92 people have been charged or cautioned with the supply of Class A drugs this year, which is below the challenging target of 128 for the first three quarters of the year. There has been a steady improvement, with constant activity being conducted to improve on this measure.

A year-on-year increase in domestic burglary has been the biggest challenge to the Force's crime reduction target. Over the winter period, the Force has teamed up with Surrey Crimestoppers in a joint initiative to crack down on burglary through the targeting of prolific offenders and those responsible for selling stolen goods. There has also been an increase in proactive operations targeting known offenders.

The Force has seen a continual improvement for its serious crime detection rate over the past two years, most notably between May and December. Current performance at 18.1% is higher than at the end of 2009/10 (17.1%), but reaching the target of 18.6% remains ambitious.

The satisfaction level for victims of anti-social behaviour is improving, but at 74.6%, is not on track to meet the target of 79% of victims being completely, very, or fairly happy with the service they received. A number of initiatives are in place to help improve customer satisfaction. These include linking with the

DriveSMART project in relation to vehicle related incidents and working more closely with environmental health agencies to improve and standardise responses to incidents.

The Authority is now finalising the Local Policing Plan for 2011-12, which will set the targets for Surrey Police in the coming year. As well as reflecting the available resource, the Plan has been drawn up to take into account public and partners' priorities, the professional judgement of the Chief Constable and the Government's objectives for policing. The Local Policing Plan will be approved by the Authority at its next meeting on 28 March 2011.

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