

To: SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL
Date: 20 March 2012
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 2012.

Chief Constable of Surrey Police

At its meeting on 6 February, the Chairman formally welcomed Lynne Owens QPM as the new Chief Constable of Surrey after she took up her role on 1 February. Lynne joins us at the start of an exceptionally busy year for the Force, with the policing of the Olympics, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, the ongoing Leveson Inquiry and the arrival of the first Police and Crime Commissioner being just four of the significant events in the months ahead.

The new Chief Constable has already been clear that she believes that the Force's Surrey Public First Strategy remains the right one. She will be focusing the Force's efforts on keeping the public safe and ensuring that the current high levels of public confidence are maintained. Also, Lynne is keen to improve the numbers of people that the Force charges and brings before the court, recognising that whilst improvements have been made in respect of burglary, there is more work to do for other offences.

Lynne will be continuing in the tradition of the previous Chief Constable by visiting meetings of each of the Districts and Boroughs and the County Council in the coming months.

Budget and Precept

On 6 February, Surrey Police Authority agreed the Surrey Police budget for 2012/13. The Authority decided to decline a one-off grant (equivalent to a 3% increase in its share of council tax) offered by the Government in return for freezing its share of council tax for 2012/13. Instead, we will increase what we raise via council tax by 2.5%, which equates to around £2.5m in cash terms. For a Band D household, it represents an increase of around 50p per month. If we had taken the grant to freeze council tax this year, we would find ourselves with £2.5m less funding in each subsequent year.

The decision to increase council tax rather than accept the grant was taken with great reluctance and after lengthy consideration. The Authority is well aware of the difficulties facing many households at this time. However, Members also recognised that the Force has already made a number of difficult and wide ranging changes in order to adapt to reductions in funding and were of the view

that Surrey residents should not experience a detrimental level of policing service in future years.

In spite of the decision, the overall Force budget has not increased. Government police grant – which accounts for around half of our budget - has fallen and will continue to fall. The £208.8m gross budget for Surrey Police in 2012/13 represents a reduction of £3.5m from the 2011/12 budget, which was itself £3.5m lower than the 2010/11 budget.

Consultation to Inform the 2012 Local Policing Plan

On 26 March, the Authority will approve its Local Policing Plan for 2012. This document sets out performance targets for Surrey Police and is a key mechanism by which the Authority holds the Chief Constable to account. This will be the last Plan set by the Authority before the Police and Crime Commissioner sets his or her Police and Crime Plan shortly after the November elections.

The Local Policing Plan must be informed by national priorities, the professional judgement of the Chief Constable and also, importantly, the views of local people and partners. This year's Joint Neighbourhood Survey (carried out jointly by Surrey Police and Surrey County Council) has identified the three problematic issues for respondents, namely traffic congestion, speeding motorists / anti-social driving and teenagers hanging around on the streets. These priority issues remain unchanged since 2009.

The Police Authority's own consultation exercise has shown that, unsurprisingly, residents continue to place the highest priority on serious crime – both its prevention and detection. This year has also seen a sharp increase in the percentage of respondents who believe that stopping criminal gangs from operating in Surrey is very important – up from 70% last year to 89% this year.

The results of the various consultation exercises have been drawn together to inform the final Local Policing Plan to be considered by the Authority at its next meeting on 26 March.

Police and Crime Commissioner Transition Update

Colleagues in Surrey County Council have been working hard to make the necessary arrangements for the establishment of the Police and Crime Panel, which the Home Office now requires to be in place by the summer of 2012. This panel will ultimately hold the Police and Crime Commissioner to account and provide a 'check and balance' in the new system of governance. Members can expect a report to be made to each of the local authorities in Surrey in due course asking for their nomination to the panel and their agreement to the panel's proposed ways of working.

The Police Authority has continued to hold a series of briefings for Community Safety Partnerships and other interested parties to ensure that relevant people are aware of the significant changes that the November elections will bring to police accountability.

Winsor Review

The second part of Tom Winsor's review of police officers' pay and conditions is expected shortly. It will focus on a number of themes relating to basic pay, contribution or role-related pay, the entry routes into the police service, career length and pension age. The second part of the review has the potential, if implemented, to make recommendations which will have a significant effect on the long-term remuneration and conditions of police officers and staff.

Operation Austin

Operation Austin was a series of dawn raids that took place across the county in late January. As a result, 25 arrests have been made and a significant amount of cash and Class A drugs seized. Reassurance work is now being undertaken in the local neighbourhoods affected.

Business Partnering in Policing

Members will be aware of the 'Business Partnering in Policing' work being undertaken by Surrey Police with the Home Office and West Midlands Police. This project, which remains in its very early stages, will explore the feasibility of working with the private sector to improve the delivery of services for the public, whilst at the same time making savings. There has recently been national media coverage of the Business Partnering project, some of which makes unfounded and highly misleading assumptions and predictions.

Surrey and the West Midlands are looking at some of the behind the scenes activities that support front line policing. Business Partnering is not about replacing police officers or taking them off the streets. As the Chief Constable has made very clear, any suggestion that private companies would be patrolling the streets of Surrey is nonsense. Rather, by making better use of resources, Surrey Police has the potential to make savings to protect frontline services in the long-term.

As Members will appreciate, the Force is not exploring radical changes for the sake of change but in the current financial climate, doing nothing is not an option. The Force budget continues to decrease and as such, the Police Authority must consider every option for protecting core services. The Authority has insisted on a series of 'gateways' throughout the Business Partnering project at which points we can withdraw from it if it becomes clear that further progress would not be productive. The final decision on the signing of any contract will be for the Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC). We have held a number of public meetings on the topic of Business Partnering and have a dedicated page on our website where the most up to date information can be found – www.surreypa.gov.uk

Contact details –

Name: Alison Bolton
Telephone number: 01483 630200
Email address: bolton11786@surrey.pnn.police.uk