

**MINUTES** of the meeting of the **SURREY POLICE & CRIME PANEL** held at 2.00 pm on 6 February 2013 at Ashcombe Suite, County Hall, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT1 2DN.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Panel at its next meeting.

**Members:**

- \* Mrs Dorothy Ross-Tomlin (Chairman)
- \* Borough Councillor Terry Dicks (Vice-Chairman)
- A Borough Councillor John O'Reilly
- \* Borough Councillor Clive Smitheram
- \* Borough Councillor Richard Billington
- \* District Councillor Margaret Cooksey
- \* Borough Councillor Victor Broad
- \* Borough Councillor Penny Forbes-Forsyth
- \* Borough Councillor Charlotte Morley
- \* District Councillor Ken Harwood
- A Borough Councillor Mrs Pat Frost
- \* Borough Councillor Bryan Cross
- \* Independent Member Anne Hoblyn
- A Independent Member Janice Turner

\* = In attendance

A = Apologies

**21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE [Item 1]**

Apologies were received from Councillor John O'Reilly, Councillor Pat Frost and Independent Member Janice Turner.

**22 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING [Item 2]**

The minutes of the meeting that took place on 13 December 2012 were agreed as a correct record.

**23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]**

None.

**24 POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER'S PROPOSED PRECEPT FOR 2013-14 [Item 4]**

The Chairman of the Police and Crime Panel explained that the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 required that the Panel review the Police and Crime Commissioner's proposed precept for the forthcoming financial year. Under the legislation the Panel could agree the precept without qualification or comment, support the precept and make comments or recommendations concerning the application of the revenues generated, or veto the proposed precept.

The Chairman stated that the purpose of the meeting was therefore to allow the Commissioner to outline his proposals in more detail and to answer any questions Panel members might have before the Panel made its decision.

The Commissioner provided the Panel with an overview of his proposed budget and precept for 2013/14, as detailed in the agenda papers, and made the following key points:

- The Surrey Police budget was made up of two distinct elements: grants from Central Government and money raised through Council Tax.
- Surrey Police had historically received one of the lowest levels of Government funding in the Country and funding was continuing to decrease. As such, a higher proportion of funding had to be raised through Council Tax.
- The low level of grant funding received by Surrey Police had been raised with the Government and the Minister of State for Police and Criminal Justice, Damien Green, had subsequently requested that he, as Commissioner, prepare a case for consideration.
- He had given consideration to the Government's offer of a two-year 0.5% Council Tax freeze grant but was concerned that accepting this would put the Police in a difficult financial position and create a

situation whereby it would be difficult to raise sufficient funds in future years.

- Even with the increase in the Police's share of Council Tax, the overall budget for Surrey Police next year would be £1m less than the previous year.
- Based on feedback received at recent consultation events with residents, there had been strong support for increasing Council Tax to ensure a robust policing service.
- Having recently suspended the Police's asset selling programme pending full review, a number of planned sales could no longer be used to balance the books and the Police would also have to pay for the maintenance of unsold buildings. However, it was felt that the long-term financial benefits would outweigh this initial finance burden.
- The 1.99% increase would mean that the sum paid by a Surrey Band D household for policing for the year would rise from £203.49 to £207.55. This represented an increase of approximately 8p per week.

The Chairman thanked the Commissioner for his overview and invited questions from Panel Members. During the following question and answer session, the following points were clarified:

- The purpose of the engagement events in January had been to outline to residents the impact of freezing Council Tax on frontline policing services. It had not been possible to provide the Panel with early budgetary information prior to 1 February as the Commissioner's Office had been waiting for information from the 11 boroughs and districts who had themselves been facing complications due to the localisation of Council Tax benefit. The 2% increase discussed at the public meetings had therefore not been based on specific data, more a need to mitigate the inevitable loss caused by inflation and grant reductions.
- The 1.99% precept increase would help ensure that the current level of service could be maintained. However, there were currently reviews being undertaken to assess the Police Office / Police Staff mix and the use of PCSOs.
- It was still the Commissioner's ambition to increase the number of Police Officers, despite the difficult economic climate. Whilst much of the additional money gained from a Council Tax rise would be used to maintain current numbers, he was exploring other avenues, such as confiscating criminal assets, to fund new positions.
- Whilst the Commissioner valued the unique role carried out by PCSOs, he believed that these individuals could better service the public as

fully fledged Police Officers and he hoped to encourage this transition. He noted that the starting wage of a Police Officer was less than that of a PCSO, but acknowledged that the impact of such an arrangement needed further analysis.

- Once a precept had been agreed, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner would be producing a Council Tax Leaflet with a breakdown of where money would be spent. This would also be made available on the Police and Crime Commissioner's website.
- The concept of Zero Tolerance did not necessarily mean more arrests and was based on the concept of challenging behaviour as opposed to arresting people for minor offences.
- Potential efficiencies were being sought through sharing back office functions, reducing senior headcounts and considering the way in which individual Police units were organised.
- Surrey Police had been making savings for many years and a number of efficiencies had already been implemented.
- Whilst zero-based budgeting had its merits and may be considered for future years, a more traditional, incremental approach had been adopted for 2013/14.
- As part of the process for localising Council Tax benefit, money had been given by Government to mitigate the initial impact. It was thought that Surrey Police had been slightly over-funded in this regard and that the Government might later ask that the money be returned. As such, money had been set aside in reserves to account for this. In addition, one-off grants received by the Police could not easily be used to fund ongoing services and therefore these had also been added reserves.
- The decision to freeze the sale of Police assets meant that additional maintenance costs would be incurred. Coupled with some other ongoing issues, there was a need to ensure that the Police had adequate reserves in place.
- The Commissioner had a duty to set the strategic direction of the budget but it was for the Chief Constable to ensure that the budget was suitably aligned to allow her to deliver against the agreed priorities. The Chief Constable could vire up to £300,000 from one budget heading to another, although options for increasing this limit were being explored.
- The Chief Constable 'owned' the budget but it was the Commissioner's responsibility to ensure that it was spent efficiently and effectively. To do this he held monthly meetings with the Chief

Constable, all of which were webcast. He would also be feeding back the important details of any discussions to the Panel.

- There was a need to ensure that Commissioners could collectively speak to the Government and it was felt that the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners was a reasonable mechanism for doing this. The Association also provided guidance to its members on policy matters and legislation. As such, it was felt that, despite the cost, membership was important.
- The Commissioner had some concern that the Association had started to become politicised, with its members falling into clear political groups. However, at present membership was still the best method by which he could ensure Surrey's voice was heard.
- The Commissioner would be looking closely at the Police's bulk buying arrangements and procurement processes to ensure that the Police received the best price possible.
- The rounding up of Community Safety Funding from £659,000 to £0.8m was admittedly large but had been done to give a broad indication of how money was being allocated.
- It was accepted that the consultancy budget could have perhaps been better described as a contingency fund. No consultants had yet been appointed and there were no immediate plans to do so. If a situation arose when a consultant was required, proper tendering rules would be followed. The Commissioner stated that he would be willing to consider using local experts that volunteered their services and would not spend money where capability already existed within the workforce.
- It was still necessary to recruit new officers to mitigate the effects of natural wastage as existing officers reached retirement.
- The targets detailed in the draft Police and Crime Plan were not yet agreed and were still subject to change.
- In allocating the new Community Safety Grant, the Commissioner intended to increase Domestic Violence funding by 6%, put £59,000 into youth diversion programmes and £60,000 into custody drug testing. His Deputy was also looking at how best to work with existing Community Safety Partnerships in the Boroughs and Districts.
- The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner was part of a consortium of local authorities in Surrey that used RSM Tenon to provide an internal audit function. Current areas being looked at included ICT and the Salfords Custody Suite project.

- Following the abolition of the Audit Commission, external audit was provided by Grant Thornton. Once completed a copy of the report would be provided to the Commissioner and would include an audit opinion.
- The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner was responsible for producing a wide range of leaflets, including consultation documents. The budget for photocopying had therefore been set at an appropriate level.
- HMIC provided access to information which allowed Police and Crime Commissioners to compare statistics for different force areas and this would help determine reasonable targets. Public feedback would also help identify areas for improvement. The Commissioner stated that his initial impression was that the majority of residents would like more done to combat violence, anti-social behaviour and burglary. There appeared to be less appetite for more resources to be spent on vehicle crime and it may therefore be appropriate to reconsider whether this should remain a focus for the Police.
- Due to the various organisational and financial changes facing the Police, and the impact this had had on the working environment and conditions, the Commissioner was concerned that officers and staff were increasingly feeling undervalued. He was concerned that more visible officers were needed but that this naturally had a significant financial implication. However, he accepted that he had to work within the confines of the funds available and would be working innovatively with partners to improve efficiency within the wider system.
- It was felt that Community Safety in Surrey had become overly complex, with too many different groups and organisations undertaking similar yet unconnected work. The Commissioner had asked his Deputy to look into this to ensure that future arrangements avoided duplication of effort.

Having considered the answers provided, the Chairman requested that the Panel vote on whether to agree the Commissioner's proposed precept for 2013/14.

**RESOLVED:** That

- i. The Panel unanimously agree the Police and Crime Commissioner's proposed precept of 1.99% for 2013/14;
- ii. A letter be sent to the Police and Crime Commissioner, confirming the decision and making the following recommendations:

- a. The Police and Crime Panel receive quarterly monitoring reports on the budget.
- b. The Police and Crime Commissioner review the targets to be included in the Police and Crime Plan to ensure they are ambitious.
- c. The lead time for providing the Police and Crime Panel with financial information for the 2014/15 precept is increased to ensure effective scrutiny of the proposals.
- d. Discussion be held with the Finance Task Group to understand the full detail of the Surrey Police Budget, once available, and agree with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner the format and content of the budget reports for 2014/15.

**25 DEPUTY POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER'S OBJECTIVES AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW [Item 5]**

The Chairman explained that following the confirmation hearing for the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner (DPCC) that took place on 13 December 2013, she had, on behalf of the Panel, written to the Commissioner to support the appointment of Mr Jeff Harris.

At the request of Members, she had also put forward a recommendation that the Commissioner provide the Panel with the criteria by which the DPCC's performance would be assessed and that he share the results of future appraisals with Members.

It was explained that the Commissioner had agreed to both these requests and had provided the Panel with a copy of the DPCC's objectives for 2013/14 in the attached report.

**RESOLVED:** That

1. The Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner's objectives for 2013/14 be noted.

Meeting ended at: 3.35 pm

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**Chairman**

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