

Minutes of a meeting of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Police and Crime Panel held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 29 January 2015.

PRESENT

Mr. J. T. Orson JP CC (in the Chair)

Cllr. R. B. Begy, OBE
Cllr. David Bill MBE
Cllr. J. Boyce
Cllr. M. Graham
Cllr. A. V. Greenwood MBE
Miss. H. Kynaston

Cllr. William Liquorish
Col. R. Martin OBE, DL
Cllr. Trevor Pendleton
Cllr. Sarah Russell
Cllr. Lynn Senior
Cllr. Manjula Sood, MBE

Apologies

Cllr. D. Slater and Cllr. Paul Westley

In attendance

Sir Clive Loader, Police and Crime Commissioner, Simon Cole, Chief Constable and Helen King, Chief Finance Officer

108. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2014 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

109. Public Question Time.

There were no questions received.

110. Urgent Items.

The Chairman indicated that he had agreed to consider an urgent item raised by Mr. D. C. Bill CC in regard to the theft of ATMs at various locations around the County.

111. Declarations of Interest.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

Col Robert Martin declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item 5 as the Trustee of "Warning Zone" which was in receipt of some funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner (Minute 112 refers).

Cllr. M. Sood declared a personal interest in respect of all substantive items as a member of the Police's Independent Advisory Panel and as the Chairman of the Leicester Council of Faiths.

112. Proposed Precept 2015/16 and Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The Panel considered a report of the Police and Crime Commissioner for the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner concerning the Proposed Precept for 2015/16 and the Medium term Financial Strategy. A copy of the report, marked "Agenda Item 5", is filed with these minutes.

In introducing the report, the PCC delivered a speech, the content of which is set out below:

"This is my third budget as a Police and Crime Commissioner and you will be unsurprised to hear that the deliberations have not been any easier this year. Despite that, we have not been swayed from the Strategic Plan, you will recall that the approach which was taken in my first year allowed investment in frontline PCSOs and volunteer capacity in the second and this year we have had to overcome some unprecedented top-slicing last year and again, this while implementing a very significant transformational change programme.

As you are all aware, we are at the tail end of the current spending period, which has rightly focused on addressing this nation's need to balance the public purse, this in-turn leading significant funding cuts in public services, across the board.

Within Leicestershire Police, much of the easier savings activity was undertaken before my arrival and that particular well of opportunity ran dry perhaps more quickly than in other organisations and for this I thank the strong leadership and prudent financial management which was evident in those preceding years. But now, together, the Chief Constable and I have agreed a way forward with a transformational change programme - a programme designed by his experts that will deliver a quality policing service and enhance our ability to tackle the issues that cause concern to most of our communities, a way that will keep policing visible, that will tackle demand and meet reasonable public expectation and which will critically remain within an ever reducing budgets.

We have done everything within our power to close the gap identified in my first Police and Crime Plan and the associated Medium Term Financial Strategy. It is a fact that the Force has delivered or has identified over £38 million in cashable efficiency savings since financial year 09/10. But I think we all appreciate that we cannot balance the books on willpower alone. As you will see from the MTFS in your papers, further challenges are looming. Even this coming year we had to take into account the £5.7 million reduction in our government funding. A sum that was only £1 million more than that previously indicated in the December settlement. The position is again compounded by the overall policing pot being top-sliced to pay for the development of other initiatives and organisations, the Home Office Innovation Fund, against which, as you know, we can bid, the Independent Police Complaints Commission and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies, and so on...

Quite frankly, whilst I acknowledge that those do bring certain benefits, I would very much prefer it if the money was coming from someone else and someone else was picking up the bill.

You will have seen that our MTFS gives a financial view out to 2019/20, as it must. But this in itself is a real challenge as our work has had to be based upon the single year of funding information given to us, putting an inevitable level of uncertainty in to that forward planning in the outer years. For sure though, the next comprehensive spending review, whatever the outcome of the General Election in May, is extremely unlikely to be anything other than incredibly difficult to deliver.

On the basis of the information however that we do have at our disposal, it is evident that by financial year 19/20, there will be another funding gap if nothing is done now. Increasing the police precept, although quite clearly not solving the whole problem, will make a contribution and will do so year on year – a guaranteed element of baseline police funding for those future years.

Now last year's police precept increase of 1.5% enabled an increase in the number of funded PCSOs on our streets from 223 to 251, making a demonstrable addition to community and neighbourhood safety, particularly in the area of anti-social behaviour hot spots. It also allowed investment in boosting our volunteer contribution as I mentioned earlier.

We do have our reserves, but they are held - and I have reassured myself of this – at nothing more than judicious levels and they are there to guard against rainy days, they are most certainly not there to be squandered shoring up a new budget which is being discussed today.

That said, I have always made it very clear that I am very prepared to sue appropriate reserves to provide spend-to-save opportunities or to address very specific issues for which revenue funding or savings will only come on stream in future years. And that is why, as you will have read as part of these budget proposals, I am committing and ring-fencing up to £2 million from those reserves in order to allow the Chief Constable, in concert with partners, to address some of the most pernicious emergent crime which threaten our vulnerable young people: hate crime, child sexual exploitation, grooming (including that online) and cyber bullying and so on...

As you would expect in formulating my decision, I have listened very carefully to feedback from the public and their views are quite clear. Our consultation showed that over 70% of respondents were fully prepared to pay a few pence more per week towards policing than they currently do. So taking all of this in to account, I have decided to set my budget for 15/16 - which needs of course to provide adequate resources to the Chief Constable to deliver the objectives in the Plan - at £171.573 million, before use of reserves. Of this, £53.216 million will be raised by the police precept, an increase equating to what I am allowed to increase it by of 1.99%. This amounts to a rise of just over 7p per week (£3.51 per year) for a band D household. That 1.99% increase will raise an additional £1.038 million which will augment, and just as importantly guarantee, the base budget for the future. This is why I have made the decision not to accept the freeze grant with its inherent uncertainty, which would in any case of only delivered an additional £0.58 million on to our baseline figure.

The Chief Constable and I will continue to drive savings throughout the organisation and I have formally tasked Simon to set in train work specifically aimed at identifying at least a further £2.5 million in revenue savings, which I accept may require some one-off financial support and here again I expect that reserves may be judiciously used. I have asked to see the Chief Constable's proposals by June this year, thus enabling them to be woven into our financial plans from financial year 16/17 onwards.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have thought very long and hard before deciding that, like many other local authorities an increase in the precept is vital. This is not a decision I have taken lightly and it has most certainly not been an easy one, but it is I am quite clear, the right one.

Thank you.”

Arising from a discussion, the following points were noted:

- The top slicing of the police budget was a direct consequence of the “Plebgate” scandal and aimed to reinforce the external auditing functions of the HMIC and the IPCC as well as to set up a centralised “Innovation Fund” which forces could bid for on a match-funded basis;
- Bids made for Innovation funding for 2015/16 amounted to £3-4 million. In the unlikely scenario that all bids were successful, this would require match funding from reserves;
- Little was known at present about the £5 million of top-sliced funding made available by the Home Secretary known as the “Police Knowledge Fund”. There was though likely to be a match funded element to any bids for this funding;
- The Force was welcoming of independent scrutiny and audit, however there were concerns about exactly how many complaints would be taken on from the Force by the IPCC. The Chief Constable felt that the budget for complaints would likely remain roughly the same;
- The Home Office’s proposals for the allocation of police complaints to PCCs were currently out to consultation. Whilst the PCC did not wish to give an opinion at this stage as to whether he was for or against this proposal, he believed that were this to go ahead appropriate resourcing would need to be made available. The Chief Constable felt that it would be possible for the PCC to commission the Chief Constable’s office to deal with complaints should this responsibility transfer to the PCC;
- £2 million of funding from reserves had been set aside by the OPCC to enable the Chief Constable to deal with the following emergent issues: grooming, hate crime and child sexual exploitation. The PCC felt that hate crime was being under reported and involved particularly vulnerable people and it was important that this was addressed. He considered that the other priority areas were pernicious and required particular skillsets to address them;
- The PCC had taken into account the concerns and requirements of all communities when drafting his budget;
- The PCC was looking at all avenues to identify savings through joint working with partners, including the possibility of co-location, where it was felt that this would enable more efficient working by bringing together staff with the appropriate expertise. The PCC was particularly interested in the prospect of joining up blue light services, where appropriate. One example was given of the Police being able to take on the fire service’s phone service without the need for additional capacity;
- There was an emphasis in the budget on the recruitment of 1,000 extra volunteers in addition to the current consignment of 400 Special Constables and 300 other volunteers. The additional 1,000 volunteers would enable 70,000 patrol hours;
- In response to concerns expressed about the reduction in frontline firearms officers, the PCC indicated that the reduction in funding meant that there was no alternative

but to reduce frontline officers and rely on a blend of staff with different expertise. He added that preventative commissioning in areas, such as the Supporting Leicestershire Families programme, would reduce the demand on frontline officers;

- Station closures in Market Bosworth, Shepshed and Hinckley were highlighted as having attracted concerns locally. The Chief Constable offered to provide the local members with a note on these issues;
- The planning assumptions in the MTFs were based on national guidance from HMIC and the Home Office. Data was also shared amongst OPCCs across the country.

It was moved by the Chairman and seconded by Mr. Pendleton CC:-

“That the proposal to increase the 2015/16 Precept for police purposes by 1.99% to £179.9951 be supported”

The motion was carried, 12 members having voted for the motion with one abstention*.

** Prior to moving the motion, Mr. Boyce indicated that, as Leader of Oadby and Wigston Borough Council, he would not be voting on any motion to agree a rise in the precept as his Council were intending to take the Government's Council Tax Freeze Grant.*

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the information presented in this report, including the total 2015/16 budget requirement (before use of reserves) of £171.573m, which includes a council tax requirement for 2015/16 at £53.216m be noted;
- (b) That the proposal to increase the 2015/16 Precept for police purposes by 1.99% to £179.9951 be supported;
- (c) That the additional considerations included in the precept proposal be noted;
- (d) That any changes required, either by Government grant alterations notified through the final settlement or through council tax base and surplus/deficit notifications received from the collecting authorities, will be balanced through a transfer to or from the Budget Equalisation Reserve (BER) be noted;
- (e) That the current MTFs, the savings already achieved and plans to identify further solutions alongside the requirements of the Police and Crime Plan be noted.

113. PCC Grant Applications 2015/16.

The Panel considered a report of the Police and Crime Commissioner concerning an update on the current position with respect to grant applications for 2015/16. A copy of the report, marked “Agenda Item 6”, is filed with these minutes.

Arising from the discussion, the following points were noted:

- The PCC confirmed that the process of awarding grants was without bias. A recommendation of the Grants Panel was made to the Commissioner, who had been happy on all occasions thus far to go with the Panel's recommendations;

- The importance of providing feedback to unsuccessful applicants, including feedback showing the outcomes for successful bidders, was stressed as a means of enabling them improve at the next round of applications. Unsuccessful applicants were signposted to other sources of funding, where appropriate;
- Quarterly evaluations were required of successful applicants to enable a close and stringent monitoring of their progress;
- Concern was expressed that identification of geographical areas for which funding was available should so far as possible reflect ward boundaries.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

114. Force Change Programme: Update.

The Panel considered a report of the Police and Crime Commissioner concerning an update on the consultation and risk assessment methodology applied by Leicestershire Police throughout the Force Change Programme process. A copy of the report, marked "Agenda Item 7", is filed with these minutes.

Arising from the discussion, the following points were noted:

- An EIA on the impact of the Programme on communities had not been carried out, however the Force, with the PCC, had gone to great lengths to ensure that communities were aware of the Programme and able to comment on the effect it would have on frontline policing, including through attendance at a number of public engagement sessions. The Chief Constable was happy to bring this work together into one document for the benefit of the Panel;
- A group would be monitoring the effects of the Programme and specific issues such as rural response times, which the Police were happy to share with partners. After a period of around 3 months there would be a full evaluation of the Programme which would be reported to the PCC and then the PCP. The Panel suggested the benefit of evaluations also at 6 and 12 months;
- The PCC stressed the importance of public satisfaction and confidence surveys as a means of ensuring that the Programme was making a positive difference on communities;
- The Chief Constable explained that recent correspondence from the Police updating partners on the Change Programme had made some reference to child abuse as "incidents" rather than a "crimes"; it was not in any way intended to underplay the importance of such crimes. There was a national standard for crime and incident recording, which the Chief Constable was happy to share with the Panel;
- A Strategic Risk Assessment was completed in conjunction with the Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire forces to ensure that the Force was able to cope any potential firearms threat. The threat for the forces was currently regarded as "severe" which meant it now had parity with the country as a whole. Weaponry and protective supplies had recently been upgraded to take

account of this.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted;
- (b) That the proposed methodology for evaluating the Force Change Programme be shared with Panel members.

115. Child Sexual Exploitation - Interim Update.

The Panel considered a report of the Police and Crime Commissioner concerning an update on a review of historic Child Sexual Exploitation cases at Leicestershire. A copy of the report, marked "Agenda Item 8", is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

116. Date of next meeting.

It was NOTED that the next meeting of the Panel would be held on 23 March at 1.00pm.

117. Urgent Item: Theft of ATMs around the County

The Panel considered this matter, the Chairman having decided that it was of an urgent nature due to the severity and frequency of these crimes taking place around the County.

With the agreement of the Chairman, Mr. Bill CC addressed the Panel by asking for the Commissioner for assurance that action was being taken to safeguard premises with ATMs and that the matter was being addressed and prioritised.

The Chief Constable reported that investigations were ongoing into five offences in Leicester and Leicestershire and that similar offences had taken place outside of the County. The enquiry was being dealt with by senior officers at the Force. Discussions were ongoing with the Co-Operative Group in an effort safeguard against further offences.

RESOLVED:

That the update of the Chief Constable be noted.

118. Announcement.

The Chairman and members of the Panel wished to put on record their congratulations to Deputy Chief Constable, Simon Edens and a former Temporary Deputy Chief Constable Steph Morgan (retired) who had been awarded the Queen's Police Medal in the 2014 honours list.