Agenda Item 1

Minutes of a meeting of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Police and Crime Panel held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 31 January 2018.

PRESENT

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

Cllr. John Boyce	Cllr. Sue Hunter
Cllr. Lee Breckon, JP	Ms Mehrunnisa Lalani
Cllr. John Bridges	Cllr. Abdul Osman
Cllr. Ruth Camamile	Cllr. Brian Page
Cllr. Stephen Corrall	Cllr. Michael Rickman
Mr Keith Culverwell	Cllr. Manjula Sood, MBE
Cllr. Malise Graham	Cllr. Alan Walters

In attendance
Lord Willy Bach – Police and Crime Commissioner
Kirk Master – Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner
Chief Constable Simon Cole – Leicestershire Police
Paul Dawkins - Assistant Chief Officer (Finance & Resources) Leicestershire, Northamptonshire & Nottinghamshire Police, and interim Chief Finance Officer, OPCC
Paul Hindson – Chief Executive Officer, OPCC

27. Minutes of the Confirmation Hearing held on 5 December 2017.

The minutes of the Confirmation Hearing held on 5 December 2017 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

28. Minutes of the previous Police and Crime Panel meeting.

The minutes of the Police and Crime Panel meeting held on 5 December 2017 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

29. Public Question Time.

There were no questions submitted.

30. Urgent items.

There were no urgent items for consideration. However, Cllr. Sood, MBE thanked Leicestershire Police for the way they were dealing with the recent murder which had taken place in the Belgrave area of Leicester. In response the Chief Constable thanked the community for their support in helping the Police investigate the matter.

31. 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.

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

Mr. K. Culverwell declared a personal interest in respect of all substantive items as he had two close relatives that worked for Leicestershire Police.

Ms. M. Lalani declared a personal interest in respect of all substantive items as she had a close relative that was a member of the Police Cadets.

32. Independent Panel Members

The Panel considered a report of the Secretariat concerning the recruitment process and appointment of the Panel's independent co-opted members. A copy of the report, marked "Agenda Item 6", is filed with these minutes.

The Chairman welcomed the two new Independent Members, Mr Keith Culverwell and Ms Mehrunnisa Lalani, to their first Police and Crime Panel meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be noted

33. Police Precept and Budget

The Police and Crime Panel considered a report of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) concerning the Proposed Precept for 2018/19 and the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 7', is filed with these minutes.

Prior to presenting the report the PCC gave clarification on the arrangements in place for the role of Chief Finance Officer at the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. Since the former Chief Finance Officer Mrs Helen King had left, the role had been carried out in an interim capacity by Mr Paul Dawkins who was also the Assistant Chief Officer (Finance & Resources) at the Office of the Chief Constable. Members raised concerns that there could have been a conflict of interest in Mr Dawkins carrying out the two roles at the same time. The PCC stated that in his opinion there had been no conflict of interest and Mr Dawkins had played an invaluable role in producing the budget which was before the Panel.

With regard to a permanent successor to Mrs King, a role had been advertised with the title Director of Finance. Interviews had been conducted and a candidate had been selected. It was intended that the Panel would be formally notified of the candidate once a final security check was completed enabling a Confirmation Hearing to be arranged as per the legislation. As of 29 January 2018 the candidate had been spending time at the OPCC in order to familiarise himself with the office and he was being paid a salary for the days he spent working there. The Panel raised concerns as to whether this was compliant with the legislation given that a Confirmation Hearing had not been held yet and the Panel's Monitoring Officer advised that provided the employment status of the Director of Finance was as described and he was being paid on a daily rate as an agency worker on a self-employed basis (rather than being a permanent fulltime member of staff) then the legislation would not apply.

The PCC in introducing the item made the following points:

(i) The Police Funding Settlement had been decided by the Government on the basis that Police and Crime Commissioners had the option of increasing the Precept by up to £12 a year for a band D property therefore in the view of the PCC there was an expectation from Government that he would do so. The PCC felt he had no choice.

(ii) Were the PCC not to increase the Precept by the maximum allowed amount then Leicestershire Police would be required to lose 52 Police Officer posts. Were the proposed Precept of £12 a year for a band D property to be approved this would enable an additional 24 Police Officers to be recruited from current levels and a total of 72 more officers than if the precept was only increased by 1.99%.

Arising from discussions the following points were noted:

(i) In response to a question from a Member, the PCC re-iterated that he and the Chief Constable had made representations to Government regarding fairer funding for Leicestershire Police in comparison with other Forces. Local MPs had supported this campaign as well as the Police and Crime Panel itself. However, the PCC was not confident that the campaign would result in a significant improvement in funding for Leicestershire Police which is why this budget had been a cautious one.

(ii) There were guidelines on the minimum and maximum level of general reserves. Whilst it was extremely risky to empty the reserves or reduce them to dangerous levels, consideration had been given to how the reserves could be used and this budget used £5million of the reserves.

(iii) The funds which had been generated by the Change Team were included in the budget which was before the Panel. The Change Team had previously been funded by reserves in 2017/18. For 2018/19, the team's costs had been included within the base revenue budget and would no longer be funded from reserves. It was intended to develop a further savings plan which would be shared with the Panel at a future meeting.

(iv) A Member queried whether the budget took into account the possibility that the Council Tax collection rate could be lower as a result of the implementation of Universal Credit. In response it was clarified that the OPCC were aware of this possibility however the Council Tax collection figures provided to them by District Councils did not contain the detail to enable them to make any firm judgements on this.

(v) The OPCC paid the following membership fees:

- £19,750 per annum for the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC);
- £2622 per annum for the Police and Crime Commissioners' Treasurers' Society;
- £900 per annum for the Association of Policing and Crime Chief Executives (APACE);
- £700 for the Independent Custody Visitors Association.

Being a Member of the APCC had value in that it enabled advice and best practice to be shared amongst its members and it was also able to give a view when reforms to policing were being considered nationally.

(vi) Leicestershire Police had its own procurement team which looked for the best value and would only enter procurement on a national basis where that was the most cost effective option. Where better value could be obtained by procuring on a regional basis these opportunities would be pursued.

(vii) It was noted that the proposed budget supported more use of technology enabling officers to complete more tasks away from a police station. Some of this technology relied on an internet connection and there had been problems with internet coverage in some areas of Leicestershire and Rutland but this problem had largely been overcome.

(viii) The PCC confirmed that it was still intended to use Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) in Leicestershire Police however a balance needed to be struck with the ratio of PCSO's to warranted officers and it had been decided to reduce the number of PCSOs to 180 by 2021 by a process of natural wastage.

(ix) It was noted by a Member that many local authorities had reviewed their Treasury Management Policies and moved away from a strategy of zero risk in order to gain a greater return on investments, and it was therefore questioned whether Leicestershire Police should do the same. In response the Panel was informed that the OPCC and Leicestershire Police intended to conduct a review of this issue.

(x) For 2017/18 the OPCC had an underspend of £84,000 which was being transferred to the Chief Constable to spend on policing issues such as tackling rural crime and violent crime.

(xi) In response to concerns raised about the closures of some police stations it was noted that due to financial constraints a choice had to be made between officers on the streets and officers manning the front desk at police stations and given that the footfall at many police stations was low the decision had been made to prioritise the former.

It was moved by the Chairman and seconded by Cllr. Rickman that:-

(a) The information presented in the report, including the total 2018/19 net budget requirement of £176.255m, including a council tax requirement for 2018/19 of £63.093m be noted;

(b) The proposal to increase the 2018/19 Precept by £12.00 per annum (6.41%) for police purposes to £199.2302 for a Band D property be supported.

(c) The future risks, challenges, uncertainties and opportunities included in the precept proposal, together with the financial and operational considerations identified be noted;

(d) It be noted that any changes required, either by Government grant alterations notified through the final settlement or through amended 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).

(e) The current MTFP, the anticipated savings required and plans to identify further solutions alongside the requirements of the Police and Crime Plan be noted.

The motion was carried unanimously.

34. OPCC office structure

The Police and Crime Panel considered a report of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) which provided an update on the revised staffing structure of the OPCC and progress on filling the posts which were in the structure. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 8', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussions the following points were noted:

(i) Reassurance was given that efforts were being made to ensure that both the OPCC and Leicestershire Police had a diverse workforce.

(ii) Concerns were raised regarding the retention of staff at the OPCC and the perceived inability of the OPCC to attract high quality applicants for some of the roles that were vacant. The Chief Executive of the OPCC Mr Paul Hindson stated that in fact retention rates were quite high. He acknowledged that further analysis needed to be carried out to ascertain why the OPCC found it difficult to recruit to some posts and he offered to provide an update to the Panel once the matter had been investigated.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be noted.

35. Cross-Force Collaboration.

The Panel considered a report of the Secretariat concerning scrutiny of cross-force collaboration between police forces in the East Midlands. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 9', is filed with these minutes.

Panel Members were of the view that most of the areas of work where cross-force collaboration took place were operational matters and therefore not within the remit of the PCC nor the Police and Crime Panel. The PCC confirmed that whilst the PCCs in the region met as a group from time to time and discussed what was occurring regionally he generally had little involvement in cross-force collaboration.

It was moved by the Chairman and seconded by Cllr. Boyce that:-

(a) The Chairman and one other representative (Vice-Chairman or an Independent Member) be requested to attend meetings of the Regional Network of Police and Crime Panels and report back on issues raised at such meetings;

(b) That the PCC be asked to submit annual reports on regional collaborative arrangements and the impact and effectiveness of such arrangements;

(c) That at this point in time the need for a regional scrutiny body has not been made and that the Seminar proposed for 2018 when an update would be provided on the vision, business plans and outcomes of regional collaboration should provide sufficient oversight.

The motion was carried unanimously.

36. Date of next meeting.

RESOLVED:

It was noted that the next meeting of the Panel would be held on 28 March 2018 at 1:00pm at City Hall, Leicester.

1.00 - 3.00 pm CHAIRMAN
31 January 2018