



Dorset Police and Crime Panel

Minutes of a meeting held at County Hall, Dorchester
on 10 November 2014

Present: Members

Borough Poole

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Co-opted members:

Phil Goodall

Bournemouth Borough Council

John Adams (Chairman)

Co-opted members:

Dennis Gritt

Christchurch Borough Council

Bernie Davis

Dorset County Council

Fred Drane

Ian Gardner

East Dorset District Council

Malcolm Birr

North Dorset District Council

Gary Jefferson

Purbeck District Council

Ali Patrick

West Dorset District Council

John Russell (Vice-Chairman)

Weymouth&Portland Borough Council

Michael Goodman

Independent Co-Opted members

Iain McVie

Mike Short

Officer advisers to the Police and Crime Panel:

Andy Frost, Strategic Manager DAT & Community Safety, Dorset County Council

David Northover, Senior Democratic Services Officer, Dorset County Council

Also in attendance:

Martyn Underhill, Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)

Officer advisers to the Police and Crime Commissioner

Dan Steadman, Chief Executive to the Police and Crime Commissioner

Richard Bates, Treasurer to the Police and Crime Commissioner

James Vaughan, Deputy Chief Constable, Dorset Police

Julia Yates, Head of Corporate Development, Dorset Police

(Note: These minutes have been prepared by officers as a record of the meeting and of any decisions reached. They are to be considered and confirmed at the next meeting of the Dorset Police and Crime Panel on **5 February 2015**.)

Apologies for Absence

48. Apologies for absence were received from Malcolm Davies and David Smith (Bournemouth Borough Council) and Elaine Atkinson and Ann Stribley (Borough of Poole).

Code of Conduct

49. There were no declarations by members of any disclosable pecuniary interests under the Code of Conduct.

Minutes

50. The minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2014 were confirmed and signed.

Public ParticipationPublic Speaking

51.1 There were no public questions received at the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 21(1).

51.2 There were no public statements received at the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 21(2).

Petitions

52. There were no petitions received in accordance with the County Council's petition scheme at this meeting.

Chairman's Announcements

53.1 The Chairman advised members that he and Mr Jefferson had recently visited the 101 call centre to see how operations were run. Whilst he recognised the commitment of staff to provide an effective service, he observed that there was a lack of understanding by many callers as to the purpose of the service which affected it operating as efficiently as it might. He felt that there was a need for a better understanding by those using the 101 Service of what it was designed to do and the Commissioner had ideas on the means to do this. The Panel recognised the need for the public to be better advised under what circumstances the service should be used as opposed for example, to calling 999. The Commissioner agreed to investigate particular incidents referred to by members of their experiences of using the system, but was of the view that the system had generally generated positive feedback and was now operating as it should.

53.2 The Chairman also informed the Panel that he had attended the National PCP Conference on 17 October 2014 and that this had proved to be worthwhile.

Medium Term Financial Plan Update 2014-15

54.1 The Panel considered an update to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MFTP) 2014-15 to 2016-17, which had been presented to the Panel in February 2014. The report set out responses to members' requests made at their previous meeting on 11 September for updates around specific areas.

54.2 The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) alluded to the intention that he was working towards being able to freeze the precept for 2015/16 and would recommend this to the Panel at their meeting in February 2015. However, this might not be possible should unexpected changes from government materialise between now and then. An informal seminar for the panel to be held on 11 December 2014 was designed to provide an explanation of what was being proposed.

54.3 Members asked the following questions of the Treasurer in respect of the MFTP update:

1) Can we respectfully request that the MFTP reports in December 2014 and

February 2015 that the Panel is:-

a) provided with a table showing the specific reserves, General balance and capital reserves in one place to ensure the Panel can gain an overview of all reserves and balances.

Yes

b) presented with the proposed budget for 2015/16 in a format consistent with the table on page 27 of the Quarter 2 progress against the Police and Crime Plan report.

Yes

2) Can the Treasurer please provide assurance that the £6.2m projected balance of specific reserves held as at 31/3/15, as shown in section 3.1 of the report, reflects the currently projected £364,000 transfer to reserves in 2014/15.

Yes

3) As part of the February 2014 budget report for 2014/15 the Police Commissioner created a "smoothing fund". Can the Treasurer please explain why this reserve is not referenced in the reserves table?

The appropriateness of the smoothing fund has been re-considered during the year, and it has been determined that a better use would be to contribute significantly to the LGPS deficit, which will have a more sustainable effect on revenue budgets,

54.4 In particular the PCC explained that the smoothing fund was a once off, transitional fund that had now served its purpose and would be unnecessary to use again.

54.5 The Treasurer then updated members on the specific areas members had asked to receive updates on, these being:-

- insurance,
- Specific reserves,
- General balances
- Financial Risks, and
- Icelandic banks.

and the report set out the details in respect of these. Particular reference was made to the availability of the External Auditors Annual report. Whilst this was available on the website and confirmed that the governance and financial arrangements of the Force/Panel were assured, it was confirmed that members of the Panel would be provided with a link to this.

54.6 The Treasurer provided answers to a series of questions on how the financial arrangements were applied and managed. With particular reference to the way in which decisions were taken on investments, the Treasurer confirmed that since the economic crisis in 2008, an agreed Investment Management Strategy had been developed which provided for a more controlled and stringent environment in which to operate, particular in respect to lending arrangements, with only 'AA' rated banks and countries being considered for use. This policy was available on the website.

Noted

Progress against the Police and Crime Plan 2013-17 and Priorities – Quarter 2 report 2014-15

55.1 The Panel considered a report by the Commissioner which informed members of the progress against the Police and Crime Plan and Priorities 2013 – 17 for Quarter 2 (July-September 2014).

55.2 The PCC provided commentary for members on a few key areas of activity and highlighted the priorities in the Plan.

55.3 The Panel was also updated separately on the other sections of the Plan and how performance in those areas was being managed.

55.4 The Deputy Chief Constable explained in more detail the arrangements for how the 101 call handling centre operated and how better education could play a significant part in this Service being used more efficiently. He confirmed that resources were always directed to where there was the greatest demand and the way in which call handling was managed and monitored was explained. He also confirmed that incidents were prioritised in terms of their severity, with resources being directed to meet this demand, whilst acknowledging that this might not always be perceived to be the case.

55.5 The Deputy Chief Constable confirmed that volunteers and neighbourhood watch groups played a significant part in helping to reduce the crime rates. Dorset Police acted as facilitators for these and were much valued in what they were able to achieve, given that the Force numbers were smaller than they previously had been.

55.6 The PCC updated the Panel on the use of 'body cams' and when it was anticipated that these would begin to be used. There had been an issue with the ability to store the camera's data which was captured but there now appeared to be a solution to this with evolving technology. It was hoped that this could now be rolled out across the Force. The PCC agreed to provide the Panel with updates on how this was progressing.

55.7 The way in which the recording of sexual offences were managed was also explained. The Panel were reminded that the majority of these were historic cases which had come to light in the wake of the Savile abuse case, whereby victims were now more confident in being able to report these and were actively encouraged to do so. It was therefore unsurprising that there had been a significant increase in the number of those type of offences reported. The PCC considered that it would be useful to extrapolate historical information so that a distinction might be made between those offences being investigated which were historic and those which were current. This would provide some context for performance monitoring purposes.

55.8 Figures outlined showed that, although crime in the county was down overall by 7.9 %, violence in public places, domestic abuse and sexual offences had shown an increase on the previous year. The figures covered April to September 2014. However he remained unable to fully explain the rise in violent offences across Dorset other than it reflected a national trend and in recognising the increase in its reporting, particularly in the case of domestic violence, which had consequently led to a significant increase in the number of cases being recorded. He considered that this should be seen as a positive step in identifying and addressing these incidents and, again, had largely resulted from work done by the Police to encourage such reporting.

55.9 He was also of the view that as the economy began to recover this had lead to more activity in town centres and more disposable income being able to be spent on alcoholic consumables, which no doubt had some adverse impact. However he emphasised

that resources for addressing violent crime had never been reduced and this was likely to remain the case. As previously stated in the meeting, he confirmed that the force had the capacity to use resources flexibly where necessary to meet demand.

55.10 Members asked the following questions of the Treasurer in respect of the Quarter 2 report:-

1) In reference to the table on page 28 which is supposed to track changes from the Original Budget for the year. Can the Treasurer please explain why the original budget for Operational Commands - Crime and Criminal budget has been adjusted down by £436,000?

The costs of the organised (Operation Zephyr), which had an original budget £436k, were originally shown Crime and Criminal Command, However, given of this been reviewed and is now against the cost of partnerships the costs of arrangements, be shown as a virement future.

2) Can the Panel receive an explanation as to why the budget on Operational Support is a credit of (£2.353m) and why it was a debit of £3.327m last year?

In 2013/14, the income received from the Driver Awareness Scheme, and partnership income regarding the Dorset Road Safe Partnership were shown against central income for the purpose of management reporting. However, the costs directly associated with this income - providing the Driver Awareness Scheme and the Road Safe Partnership, including staffing costs, were shown as a cost of the Operational Support Command.

The presentation of these figures was reviewed for the 2014/15 year, which has resulted in the position completely reversing. Consideration has been given to the degree of influence the Operational Support Command has over the income and expenditure budgets. The costs of DAS and Road Safe, including staff, are now allocated to the appropriate owning departments in line with the rest of the organisation. So staffing costs are shown under 'employee costs' and so on. Alongside this, the income budgets have been devolved to the Operational Support Command as they are accountable for the performance in this respect, although being entirely clear that this 'performance' relates to KSIs, and not to income generation. If there are any similar adjustments made for next year we will explain the rationale during the budget process.

55.11 The Panel were updated on the work being undertaken in addressing cybercrime and how increased investment was required to adequately tackle that issue.

55.12 A final point of note was that there was a need for differentiation between those attendees at consultation and engagement activity events in order to distinguish between officers, members and the public.

Noted

Dorset Police Front Counter Service Provision

56.1 The Panel received an update from the PCC on the changes to Dorset Police Front Counter Service provision and the PCC's role in the review process.

56.2 The Chief Executive to the PCC explained the background to the Front Counter Service Review, which were largely driven by the need to make efficiency savings and how the proposals for its future provision had been arrived at, together with details of the consultation exercise undertaken. The Panel noted the arrangements proposed to be put

in place as a consequence of the extensive review which had taken place. In particular they noted that Swanage and Winfrith stations would operate a signposting facility, whereby staff would help members of the public with their enquiries by directing them to relevant services. The business cases made for retaining those stations which remained was described.

56.3 The Panel acknowledged that the decision taken regarding future front line counter services served to highlight the difficult decisions that were required to be taken to ensure that Dorset Police were achieving the required savings as a result in the cuts to the funding of the Service.

56.4 The Panel were pleased that the public had been given an extensive opportunity to contribute towards the debate and to propose alternative ideas and were able to have a direct role in influencing and shaping the final proposals to ensure that the services were retained where they were most needed.

56.5 Some members considered that there was some evidence to suggest that there were opportunities for local authorities to have played some greater part in the pursuit of shared premises, but this opportunity now appeared to have been missed. The PCC confirmed that, by and large, he had a predilection for considering such opportunities and was alive to the prospect of shared premises wherever practicable, with the arrangements at Boscombe proving that multi agency hubbing was being encouraged. However this was not always possible owing to timing of projects and availability of premises. He confirmed that if there was seen to be a good business case for doing so, that opportunity would be actively pursued. He considered that any decision taken in respect of the particular circumstances raised would no doubt have been for a sound economic or operational reason. Nevertheless, the PCC confirmed that he would look further into the particular circumstances to which reference was made. He reminded the Panel that the main priority was to police to demand and the strategic location of stations was dependent on this.

56.6 The Deputy Chief Constable took the opportunity to amplify what the PCC had said by confirming that those locations decided upon for counter provision provided for all that was necessary for operational effectiveness. Similarly, he too would again assess those circumstances behind that particular decision taken to determine the reasoning for not pursuing this.

Noted

Strategic Alliance

57.1 The Panel were provided with an update from the Chief Executive to the PCC on developments with the proposals for a strategic alliance with the Devon and Cornwall Force, and how the detailed business cases were being developed. The arrangements being put in place for the collaborative work were explained and how these processes would be applied.

57.2 The Panel were informed that relationships between the respective forces were currently being established and, as these evolved and strategic decisions were reached, improvements to the practicalities of how this could be aligned could be made.

57.3 The Deputy Chief Constable emphasised that the intention was not to merge the two forces but to merely align areas of business that were currently duplicated to achieve efficiencies and provide for the effective management of resources, so that service delivery and resilience might be maintained, as far as possible.

57.4 The funding arrangements of the alliance were discussed and officers explained how these would be applied, together with the cost benefits which were

anticipated to be gained. In order to help the Panel in their understanding of what areas of service delivery would form part of any strategic alliance, the Chief Executive to the PCC agreed to circulate once again the slide presentation made to members at a previous meeting explaining this.

57.5 The Deputy Chief Constable confirmed that there were 26 discrete areas of operation that fell within the scope of the alliance. He clarified that, essentially, this would be back office functions such as finance, payroll, HR, ICT and the like. Issues such as local policing would not fall within this category.

57.6 The PCC confirmed that strategic changes were required in order to preserve the essential frontline delivery of services whilst meeting efficiency savings targets. The Panel were assured that the strategic alliance was driven by the need to meet cuts because, as it stood, these could not be achieved if the force remained solitary. The PCC was adamant however that the Force should retain its sovereignty and that local policing would remain unaffected. He considered that Dorset Police provided value for money and achieved more than might be expected of them.

Noted

Dates of Future Meetings and Programme of Future Business

58.1 The Panel considered and agreed its Work Programme for the remainder of the year 2014 and for 2015, with a report on estates and the amount spent on precept being considered at an appropriate time.

58.2 Members were reminded of the dates for future meetings during 2015, as follows:

- Tuesday 13 January 2015, 10.00am, Finance Workshop for all members
- Thursday 5 February 2015, 10.00am (Precept meeting)
- Friday 20 February 2015, 10.00am (Reserve date)
- Tuesday 9 June 2015. 10.00am
- Thursday 10 September 2015, 10.00am
- Tuesday 10 November 2015, 10.00am
- Thursday 10 December 2015, 10.00am, Training and Development Session for all members

Resolved

59. That the Work Programme be agreed.

Questions

60. Two questions were asked by members of the Panel to the Police and Crime Commissioner. The questions and answers are attached to these minutes as an Annexure.

Meeting Duration: 10.00am –12.35pm

Annexure

Questions for the Dorset Police and Crime Panel Meeting

10 November 2014

Question from David Smith, member for Bournemouth Borough CouncilQuestion

Can I be informed why the Chief Constable feels it is necessary to wait 6 months before allowing PCSO's to implement new sections of the Anti Social Behaviour Act.

Answer

As the Panel will be aware, the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 and the Policing Protocol Order 2011 which sits underneath it, set out a very clear structure in terms of accountability and scrutiny.

Essentially, the Chief Constable is accountable to me as the democratically elected Police and Crime Commissioner for Dorset, for the exercise of police powers and the delivery of an efficient and effective policing, management of resources and expenditure by the police force. In turn, I have an obligation to the electorate, to whom I am ultimately accountable, for the securing an effective and efficient police force and I subject myself to yourselves as a Police and Crime Panel as set out in the Act.

It is fundamentally important to emphasise that Section 24 of the Policing Protocol states that "The Panel provides checks and balances in relation to the performance of the PCC. The Panel does not scrutinise the Chief Constable - it scrutinises the PCC's exercise of their statutory functions."

Furthermore, Section 35 of the Policing Protocol states that "The PCC and Chief Constable must work together to safeguard the principle of operational independence, while ensuring that the PCC is not fettered in fulfilling their statutory role. The concept of operational independence is not defined in statute, and as HMIC has stated, by its nature, is fluid and context-driven. "

This particular question raised by Cllr Smith relates to an operational decision and therefore is clearly, in my view, outside of the Panel's duties and responsibilities. Therefore, I would not want the response that I decided to give to the question to be seen as a precedent for further operational questioning of the Chief Constable and therefore stepping outside the remit of this Panel.

I hope that the Panel will agree that I have always worked with the Panel in a spirit of openness and transparency. I consider this to be a relatively straightforward question and I will offer a straightforward answer, but I must stress my strongly held view that there are alternative methods for securing advice on how operational policing resources are being deployed and I have asked my Chief Executive to work with officer advisors to the Panel to clarify those mechanisms for the future (e.g. through Community Safety Partnerships) as I may have to strongly defend the principles established in statute and in practice.

The response that I offer is as follows:

In reply, I will firstly provide some background information. A multiagency approach has been taken in Dorset with a Pan Dorset ASS Group agreeing the local implementation and procedures for the new ASS, Crime and Policing Act 2014. Dorset Police has been a key member of this group and there have been training events and workshops to support this approach. There is still work to complete

including how the new Fixed Penalty Notices will be introduced for which the Local Authorities lead and for which the police have enforcement powers.

The role of PCSOs is well established in Dorset and we have invested significantly this year in the role providing a mandatory 2 day training course for all PCSOs. This training has ensured that PCSOs are able to contribute fully to the wide range of early intervention and informal measures used to tackle ASS. The vast majority of ASS in Dorset is resolved without recourse to formal legislation and indeed the new powers require evidence that these early measures have been tried and found to be unsuccessful. PCSOs have a key role in gathering information regarding ASS, sharing it with partners and agreeing on a way forward. Each Section Inspector has formal mechanisms for sharing information with the local authorities through the Section TCG where the more complex situations are discussed, action planned and resourced.

The new Act provides 3 new powers that can be designated to PCSOs; dispersal power, community protection notice and the ability to enforce a Public Spaces Enforcement Order. These new powers extend the role of the PCSO to areas of enforcement and will occur as outlined above when the early intervention approach has not had the desired outcome. For PCSOs to be effective in this new area they need to have specific training that will adequately prepare them for the new situations they may face. Such training is also essential to safeguard our PCSO's health and welfare.

The Home Office Statutory Guidance for frontline professionals was published in July 2014 and in September 2014 the College of Policing released the national police on line training package for police officers and PCSOs. Dorset Police are considering the specific training that PCSOs will need before being designated the new powers.

The ASS, Policing and Crime Act has been deliberately written by the Home Office to allow for local interpretation and implementation that best meets the needs of victims and local communities. The use of the new ASS powers is being monitored and I will be reconsidering the designation of these new powers to the PCSOs as the remaining multiagency procedures are finalised, PCSO specific training is developed and delivered.

I trust this answers your question.

Question from Gary Jefferson, member for North Dorset District CouncilQuestion

The PCC has pushed forward a 20 MPH speed limit in Shaftesbury, on what evidence is this based and how much will it cost the public purse.

Answer

A fundamental role of the PCC is engage with local communities in order to listen to, and understand, the crime and community safety issues that most concern them. Since taking office, road safety matters have formed a significant proportion of issues that members of the public have raised with me.

In general terms, I am a supporter of reduced speed limits at appropriate locations where there are genuine concerns about the safety of all road users there. I have also agreed with the relevant portfolio holder at Dorset County Council (DCC), Councillor Peter Finney, that petitions from the public in relation to speed limit changes will be supported by me, and given a higher priority by DCC in their consideration of engineering priorities as a result, where the following three conditions are met:

1. At least 80% of the local community support the proposal
2. A Community Speed Watch initiative is in operation at the location
3. That the local Parish Council, or the community, can assist in paying for research to support the petition

It is also preferable that both Dorset Police and the local MP support the proposal, but this is not essential.

The issue raised by Councillor Jefferson relates to an approach from a local Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator seeking my support for a 20mph speed limit to be introduced in the Shaftesbury area. At the public meeting in October I did indicate my support in principle for the request but as yet I have not received confirmation that all of the agreed criteria have been met, and am therefore yet to make a final decision with regard to this request.

Ultimately, the decision over implementing any reduced speed limit lies with DCC. They will also be able to advise on the costs of implementation where such measures are agreed and implemented.