

## **PCC UPDATE**

### **Merger:**

- Dorset is a high performing and well-regarded force, by HMICFRS, and will continue to be. Dorset remains a safe place to live, work and visit.
- Whilst everyone agreed – including AH – a single force provided the most efficient and effective way of delivering policing across the three counties, we did not place all our eggs in one basket
- The Panel will recall that the economic case showed the merger was the most effective way to safeguard future police budgets, and would deliver £70m savings over 10yrs, compared to £34m of the existing SA, or £38m if the SA was extended
- But, following the decision we don't stand still - and whilst the SA is our largest collaboration we are not dependent or reliant upon it for our future sustainability
- To be clear, merger savings were not in the MTFP
- From a Dorset perspective, we continue to explore many other collaboration opportunities:
  - Dorset hosting the Regional Forensic Collaboration
  - Dorset hosting the National Transformation Programme and both PCC and Chief Constable leading the Forensic Portfolio
  - Adoption of “Qlik sense” analysis and reporting tool with Avon and Somerset
  - Consideration of sharing a firearms range with Hampshire
  - Potentially partnering with the Bobby Van Trust in Wiltshire Police
  - A range of operational and estates collaborations with DWFRS – behind closed doors, mispers, non-injury RTCs and bi-service officers (fire PCSOs)

### **Alliance:**

- But, we firmly believe that continuing with the SA is the right thing to do – albeit we do recognise that there might be some adjustments
- However, we are also clear that we do not want to align further business areas in the immediate future. Therefore, as the alliance will be paused for the moment, the view is that the current governance is not necessary, and therefore both Deputies will revert from their current roles of leading change (Paul Netherton) and leading operations (Dave Lewis) across both forces, and although there will be some shared portfolios, will focus more on their individual forces. This new arrangement will be implemented on 1st December.
- Whilst this might on the face of it be seen as a retrograde step, the reality is that 80% of what the two deputies do will be unchanged
- Important to note we continue to work very closely together – the forces will have joint chief officer meetings every fortnight, and business boards will alternate between being local and being in alliance. The AEB governance is still under review.

### **Local governance:**

- Building on the local focus, members will recall that James was temporarily promoted to Chief, following Debbie's retirement. The decision to do this, and to temporarily promote Dave, was based on the path to the proposed merger
- It is now appropriate to recruit a permanent Chief Constable, following the collapse of the merger discussions

- The process will be launched next month, with a closing date early in the new year
- Whilst I will remain steadfastly neutral on that process, I will – independently and separately – say that I am very happy with James’ performance to date, and am of the firm belief that in this time of change the force would benefit from some stability in its senior leadership
- Of course I would want to Panel to observe the recruitment process, and I am therefore pleased that the Panel chair has very kindly shifted his diary to accommodate both the shortlisting and interview dates in January

### **PCC statement on funding:**

“When I started my first term in Office, Dorset Police had already endured two years of central government grant freezes. Since that time the financial pressures placed on all forces continue to worsen, and the demands continue to increase.

“The government grant for local policing has not increased by a single penny in the last eight years, and as a result the budget for Dorset Police has reduced, in real-terms, by £25 million. At the same time inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index, has increased by almost one-fifth.

“The small increase in force budget in recent years, 4% over six years, has been met by local taxpayers. Whilst I remain incredibly grateful for their continued support, it is time for the Government to live up to their claim that “public safety is the number one priority of the government”, a statement made by the Home Secretary to PCCs and Chief Constables less than a fortnight ago.

“We now have a Force with 500 fewer officers and staff, the lowest it’s been since the early 1980s. The demands on the police continue to grow, with no signs of abating. The increases we have seen in recorded crime, more complex crimes being committed and the need to safeguard the vulnerable in society, have all meant the police are being called upon to respond more than ever before.

“The recent budget presented by the Chancellor claimed an end to austerity; sadly this was not the case for the police. As usual we must wait until December, with our caps in hand, hoping that Government will offer a relief for policing. However, the signs look bleak, as there is already every indication is that the grant freeze will continue and costs will increase.

“Going forward you can be assured that I will continue to lobby for a fair share for Dorset and ensure value from every penny. However there will be stark choices ahead, and the reality is that we now have a perfect storm of:

- The lowest number of officers since 1981;
- Changing, more dangerous crime types;
- Huge increases in crime, especially violence and knife crime (40% increase in knife crime from last year);
- Huge increases in demand, especially as other services can no longer offer support and policing must fill the gap (10% increases this year alone);
- A Government that has given unfunded pay increases; and
- A Government that will not remove the burden of pension increases, which will potentially cost us over £4m a year.

“At the same time, the business case for the proposed merger with Devon & Cornwall Police demonstrated that after a decade of seeking efficiencies, there is very little left in that cupboard. The Government has made it clear that they expect me to raise precept to resolve these issues, but the £12 limit I currently have will not even cover the pay increase and pension issue, let alone improve policing in Dorset.

“It cannot be right that, for the first time ever, the Chief Constable and I will need to seriously consider which service must we stop in order to concentrate scarce resources on keeping people safe. However, that is precisely the situation in which we find ourselves.”