

### **Question from Cllr Les Fry to the Police and Crime Commissioner**

Dorset currently has pan Dorset Strategies for CSE, Slavery and Vulnerability issues, as well as a pan Dorset MASH.

Is there any truth in what I have been told that the two Unitaries are actively looking to create Unitary solutions, indeed, I am told that Dorset Council has already withdrawn its staff from the MASH?

Surely 2 solutions are less effective and more expensive than one?

### **Answer from Martyn Underhill, Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner**

Thank you for that interesting question.

To be honest, I am a little on the back foot here, as whilst I have heard the same information as you, that four staff have been recalled, I am not able to confirm this – as neither I, nor the Chief Constable, have received any further information through our various governance channels.

It would be quite disheartening if the rumours of the recent removal of Dorset Council staff from the MASH were true, especially if that had happened without consultation with policing and wider partners.

So, whilst I am afraid that I cannot confirm the information that you have heard, what I can say is that one of the areas of strength in our work in Dorset has been the ability to work together and evolve our public services to protect and safeguard children and young people.

The MASH has been central to this success, providing an opportunity for staff from different agencies to co-locate and share both information and operational delivery in a structured way. The MASH, currently based at Poole, is the product of a detailed piece of work, agreed by all partners, and involving a number of dedicated local practitioners whom drew upon national good practice. Crucially it ensures that police, health and social care safeguarding practitioners operate effectively and efficiently across unitary boundaries.

Despite this very strong history of successful partnership working, I have a growing sense that we are potentially rowing away from the joint working that we have worked hard to develop over recent years. Worryingly, I sense this is officer led rather than politician led.

I should say that despite my pan-Dorset role, I am not wedded to pan-Dorset structures.

However, both the Chief Constable and I would expect to see clear proposals and a business case for any suggested changes away from the current operating models beforehand.

Therefore, Cllr Fry's question raises a concerning point, and the Chief Constable and I are in the process of seeking further information. At the same time, across both Unitaries, thinking of your roles as elected members, I would very much welcome your support in attempting to understand the drivers behind this apparent retreat from successful partnership working.