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DORSET POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2020

Present: Mike Short (Chairman), Bobbie Dove (left at 13.45) (Vice-Chairman), George Farquhar, Les Fry, Mohan Iyengar, Bill Pipe, Molly Rennie, David Taylor and Tony Trent (left at 12.30).

Iain McVie.

Apologies: Cllrs Colin Bungey, Barry Goringe and Rachel Maidment.

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):

Simon Bullock (Chief Executive, OPCC), Marc Eyre (Service Manager for Assurance), Jonathan Mair (Corporate Director - Legal & Democratic Service Monitoring Officer), Jim McManus (Corporate Director - Finance and Commercial), Elaine Tibble (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Martyn Underhill (Police and Crime Commissioner), James Vaughan (Chief Constable), Julie Strange (OPCC Chief Finance Officer) and Adam Harrold (OPCC Director of Operations)

45. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Colin Bungey, Barry Goringe and Rachel Maidment.

Cllr Tony Trent attended as Cllr Maidment's substitute.

46. Welcome from Chairman

The Chairman welcomed the Panel and introduced Cllr George Farquhar, a new representative from Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council and Elaine Tibble, new Clerk to the Panel

He asked for congratulations to be passed on from the Panel to PC Clair Dinsdale of the Dorset Police Rural Crime Team, who had been awarded a Queen's Policing Medal (QPM) in the New Year's Honours List and thanks to Fiona King the former Clerk for her many years of outstanding work with the Panel.

47. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 November were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Subject to a minor amendment to point 38 (p5 para 2) which should have read "Cllr Pipe advised that he was due to meet with the Community Safety and Criminal Justice Board". As an update on minute 37, it was noted that the panel had written to each unitary council outlining concerns about the

authorities withdrawing from the Pan-Dorset Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub. It was agreed that the panel will review effectiveness of new arrangements as part of its forward work plan.

Cllr Pipe reported that the Community Safety and Criminal Justice Board had ceased to exist and no further action was possible on minute 38. He was disappointed and hoped that the board would be re-generated.

48. **Declarations of Interest**

Cllr George Farquhar declared a non pecuniary interest as a member of the PCC Customer Service Improvement Panel.

49. **Public Participation**

The Chairman re-confirmed the rules regarding public participation.

There were no statements or questions submitted from Town and Parish Councils.

The following public statements and questions were submitted to the Panel:

Questions raised by David Sidwick:

- 1) Could it be explained why from HMICFRS data - Dorset Police has the lowest percentage of front-line officers of any force yet other forces have actually had greater percentage reductions in workforce overall? Does the PCC have his priorities right?

PCC Response

I am somewhat disappointed by this question, as, although a PCC can influence, this matter is clearly an operational one for a Chief Constable. However, in this instance, I am content to provide an answer.

90.8% of FTE police officers in Dorset Police are employed in frontline roles, as at 31 March 2019, which are the latest available data. This compares to an average of 92.1% in England and Wales. While Dorset Police is in the lower quartile of forces, it by no means has the lowest proportion of all forces.

The HMICFRS methodology does not yet account for force collaborations – making the data somewhat inaccurate. For example, in Dorset we pay 30% of the costs of staff in Alliance roles – however for legal reasons a department cannot be jointly ‘hosted’, and so one force must take the lead. As Dorset Police hosts alliance functions such as finance and learning and development, this makes it look like we have a higher investment in support functions, although the true expenditure is quite different.

It is also worth stressing that Dorset has long been a very lean force. The Force has recognised appropriate workforce modernisation and utilised police

staff for roles that will provide the best service to the public where warranted powers are not required – for example Police Staff Investigators.

As part of that modernisation and to reduce demand on the frontline, an evidence based investment has been made into roles to reduce demand and provide better service to the public. One example of this is the 25 officers into the desktop investigation team. This would show as ‘non visible frontline’ however those 25 officers have been shown over a two month period to deal with 42% of crime which would otherwise have gone to the frontline – an excellent return on the investment.

I, like the PCCs of many other smaller forces, have been waiting for Government to deliver on the much delayed police funding formula review to help address this imbalance, but as most of us here today will know, this continues to be pushed into the long grass.

In terms of my role, I am content that my scrutiny of the Chief Constable allows me to say that I do not believe that the force’s priorities are wrong. In fact, I am assured, not only that the force actively takes steps to optimise and keep under continual review the level of frontline policing resources, but also that HMICFRS have not raised this as a concern, which is evidenced by Dorset Police’s suite of ‘good’ ratings.

- 2) I understand that currently only 20% of Dorset Police Officers carry tasers. As the threat to their safety has increased and the Government has provided a fund for forces to use to equip more officers, how is the PCC holding the Chief Constable to account to ensure that this funding is properly accessed and what impact would he expect to see in terms of officers carrying tasers by the end of 2020?”

PCC Response

I am afraid that this question also borders on the operational, and again I do not recognise the statistic quoted.

Before I answer, I will refer members back to the Panel held on 24 September, when I was asked to provide a view on all officers carrying Tasers. I mentioned that as the national lead for use of force, and a former police officer who was assaulted multiple times, you would not be surprised to hear that I am passionate about improving officer safety. However, as the national lead I must ensure that we balance officer safety with the proud tradition of policing by consent and that we consider the full range of options that are available.

I said I had discussed the matter of a Taser uplift with the Chief, as this is an operational decision, but we would both like to increase the number of Taser trained officers. However, that does not mean all officers should carry a Taser, as we know from research that roughly 80% of officers want to carry, assuming they pass the training, which of course many don’t.

To answer the question at hand.

Dorset Police currently has around 250 officers that carry Taser – this is a little under 45% of the officers who the Chief Constable deems suitable to do so. These officers include those in patrol, neighbourhoods, operational and public disorder units. Whilst the Government announced in late September that it was providing £10m to forces to increase the numbers of officers carrying Tasers, this is a competitive process, and the bid criteria were only made available on 13 January, ahead of a deadline of 4 February.

The Chief Constable and I are quite disappointed about the manner in which this grant is being administered. One might reasonably expect that the Government funding should cover all aspects of providing for the increase in the number of Taser officers - however, it does not.

Whilst the HO has confirmed the bid can cover the cost of the Taser device itself – this does not include any consumables such as the battery and the cartridge needed to make it operational. Nor will the bid cover the safety clips, holsters, mounts or pouches needed to safely carry the devices and spare cartridges. Nor will it cover the safes, loading boxes or any other secure equipment needed to ensure the safe storage of the devices when not in use. Nor will it cover the associated software licensing costs, training costs or administrative costs of providing the training, and it will certainly not cover the costs of paying overtime to allow officers to be abstracted from the frontline for training.

Put simply our initial estimate was that for every £1 that we might receive from this grant, it would cost Dorset Police around £6 in direct costs. Through a line-by-line examination of this budget, and both the Chief Constable and I agreeing to carry some risk in respect of future budgets, we have managed to reduce this to £3 for every £1 of grant.

Despite the significant costs to Dorset Police, both the Chief Constable and I are determined to maximise the funds available to Dorset through this grant.

Whilst the final funding is of course a matter for Government, I can confirm that our bid – if fully funded – would allow every operational frontline officer who wanted to carry a Taser, and who passed the training, to do so.

50. Budget Precept

The following items of business were considered by the Chairman as urgent pursuant to section 100B (4) b) of the Local Government Act 1972. The item was considered to be urgent because the Office of the Police Crime Commissioner had not received the Government Settlement until Thursday 23rd January 2020.

The panel received a report by the Chief Finance Officer which set out the Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) proposals for the 2020/21 budget, precept and the medium-term financial strategy.

The PCC introduced the proposal for a 4.34% increase on the Police and Crime budget precept. The PCC explained that the Chief Constable had written to him to inform the budget setting and precept proposal. A copy of the PCC's speech is attached at Annex 1.

A summary of the Chief Constable's letter to the PCC is attached at Annex 2.

The PCC then invited the Chief Constable to address the panel

The Chief Constable thanked the Panel for their support of the last year and reflected on how the increased precept for 2019/20 had benefited the communities in Dorset.

The PCC then continued to explain his proposal.

The Director of Operations then delivered a summary of the public consultation results. There had been a good response to the precept survey with over 5000 people taking part.

87% of those who completed the survey were in support of additional funding for the Police and 75% were willing to pay an extra £1.25 a month, ie £15 a year, a figure £5 higher than the proposal the PCC was outlining to the panel. A quarter of those who did not agree with a £1.25 increase were willing to pay more, but a number of people also felt further investment should come from Central Government.

Many respondents, regardless of whether they supported the precept rise or not, would like to see the presence of more officers.

The OPCC Chief Finance Officer addressed the panel. She advised that there were considerable pressures around national agreed pay awards. In addition to core and ring-fenced grants, it was proposed to put £200k in a separate reserve account for uniforms etc in preparation for the additional police officers who will be recruited over the next three years. As Section 151 Officer, assurance has to be given on the adequacy of reserves, a reserve level of 3.5% was adequate but the focus needed to be on maintaining that level. There was a robust budget in place but there would be challenges going forward with the Medium Term Financial Forecast.

Members asked the following budget related questions:-

1. The PCC has stated that Dorset Police continues to be affected by the impact of nine years of austerity. Can the PCC give clarity on how this has diminished Dorset Police's ability to keep people safe?

Response from PCC

Dorset Police's ability to keep the public safe is inextricably linked to the policing resources it controls. In 2010, there were 1486 officers, and in 2019 there were 1223 – a reduction of 18%.

Whilst austerity impacted the number of officers and staff who are available for deployment to community, patrol and response functions – it also materially affected the number of officers and staff working to keep the public safe from hidden harms such as modern slavery, child sexual exploitation and county lines.

This has meant that the force has had to substantially re-engineer its processes and maintain a critical grip on efficiency, in order to keep people safe. I believe that is the position for most forces. In fact, what has changed in Dorset, again like other forces, is that the service has been unable to invest in the full range of new capabilities to tackle emerging threats and crime types.

The Chief Constable advised that areas of concern were county lines, serious violence and homicide. He advised that while crime had plateaued innovation had come to a halt during the hardest years of austerity.

He referred to inspections by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS). This was an external form of assurance that the panel members could access to see how the Police were keeping people safe.

The Chief Constable and the PCC re-iterated the uncertainty of receiving their budget for only one year ahead, which made it difficult to put longer term strategies in place. The Government had been lobbied for a longer timeline and a fairer funding settlement.

It was suggested the Police and Crime Panel (PCP) Chairman write to the relevant authorities to try to pursue this aim whilst in the current phase of a new Government. The Chairman agreed to engage with the Chief Executive of the OPCC to take this forward.

- 2 The Capital Grant is being further reduced meaning that some of the revenue budget will have to be used in order to meet the capital programme. How much of the additional revenue will be required to support ongoing cost increases other than improvements in policing (salary increases etc)?

Response from OPCC Chief Finance Officer

There was no increase in grant to deal with any inflationary cost pressures. All of the increase in grant funding was in relation to uplift, therefore all of the increase in precept is being used to support ongoing cost increases such as pay awards, increments and the pressures on funding the capital programme. The reduction in the capital grant added another pressure that needed to be funded from the increased precept. There are no improvements proposed other than uplift, which will be provided for by way of a separate grant.

- 3 The Policing Minister has stated that he expects back room police staff to be cut as part of the government's financial uplift programme. What direction has the PCC given to the Chief Constable in order to satisfy this requirement?

Response from PCC

Whilst the Policing Minister's view has been reported in mainstream media this has not been received through official channels, and therefore this is not something that I have directed the Chief Constable about.

For avoidance of doubt, however, nine years of austerity have meant that the force has already optimised its so-called back-office staff. As many of these functions are shared with our alliance partners, or regionally, it has also become increasingly challenging to find further efficiencies.

There is however, still an expectation for efficiency, and whilst this has not been tightly defined by Home Office, forces currently consider areas such as value for money, procurement and increased efficiency from the use of technology in their considerations.

I have supported the Chief Constable in investing in technology to increase efficiency and automation in provision of back office services. This includes the investment in e-recruitment, and e-vetting, both of which will increase productivity in these areas, allowing the current officer uplift programme (for example) to be delivered at a lower cost than would otherwise be the case.

Longer term, such investment will lead to cost savings.

I have pushed for 'service area reviews' to be included in the 2019/20 budget, reducing the cost of administrative support, business change, and training. Finally, I have, through the Innovation Fund, also supported the employment of an efficiency officer, to oversee a range of innovative solutions to identify and embed best practice within the Force.

4. Section 4.2 of the report mentions contractual pay increments adding to cost pressures of £4.4M. Have turnover and/or retirements been included in arriving at this figure or is it the highest staff costs spend that we can expect to see if all posts are filled for the whole year?

Response from OPCC Chief Finance Officer

The pay budget is built up on an individual post basis, calculating the exact cost for each officer or member of staff; adding in pay awards, any increments due, impact in on-costs etc. We then apply a vacancy factor of 5.9% to reduce down the pay budgets to take account of expected turnover, new staff starting on the bottom of the grade etc. This then gives a realistic pay budget for the amount we expect to spend, rather than the maximum amount that could be incurred.

5. Can you clarify the nature of the posts deleted in section 4.3? Does the deletion of these posts not add further pressure on the ability to sustain police officer numbers as required by the government?

Response from OPCC Chief Finance Officer

The posts referred to are police staff posts that have been vacant for an extended period of time and as a result the business has determined – through its workforce planning board – are no longer required as a result of the more efficient practices that have been developed. The posts are in back office and operational support business areas. The removal of these posts is not expected to have a detrimental effect on the Force, or the ability to sustain officer numbers. By streamlining back office functions, this approach actually supports the increase in frontline police officers. This is further evidence of the efficiency work outlined in the answer to question three.

In response to further questioning regarding the overtime budget, it was hoped that the uplift of officers would reduce the overtime need. The overtime bill had reduced but was still a challenge. An additional number of officers would hopefully help staff wellbeing, reduce sickness levels and the need for overtime cover. The Police now operated a three-year apprenticeship scheme which could potentially put additional strain on existing officers in the training of the new recruits.

6. Section 4.8 outlines savings without being clear where they come from and at what stage the plans are to deliver them. Given the requirement for the OPCC to deliver a balanced budget, what steps have been taken to gain evidence and assurance that the budget is credible and balanced?

Response from OPCC Chief Finance Officer

The £0.5m savings referred to are an in-year challenge, expected to be realised through ongoing procurement savings, and continual challenge of expenditure. The Force has been subject to such an in-year challenge in most years, and has been able to meet this challenge - it is expected that this will again be the case in the coming year. The risk associated with this is considered minor, as this amounts to roughly one-third of a percent of the budget, although will be monitored throughout the year, and the Force will be required to evidence achievement of this target.

The Chairman questioned that the MTFS stated that savings, to the tune of between £4.5M and £7M out to 2024, have to be made. The OPCC had earmarked savings of £500k this year in order to balance the budget. Why not provide a stretch target, of say £1.5M, in order to make real savings and now bow wave the problem? The Chief Finance Officer highlighted that the majority of the budget was utilised for staff costs (ie wages) and that there was intense pressure in the Capital Budget that severely curtailed any aspirations for further savings.

7. The PCC sought a precept uplift of £15 in his public consultation. This has subsequently been reduced by the government to £10. With this 33% cut, what will not be undertaken in order to maintain focus on reducing crime?

Response from OPCC Chief Finance Officer

The consultation was based on a number of assumptions as the Commissioner had to consult the public before we knew the finance settlement. The £10 increase in precept is enough to undertake all activities as planned in 2020/21 without compromising the Force focus.

Had the referendum limit allowed the £15 increase, there would have been more we could have done to improve the position in future years such as:

- More of the ring-fenced grant could have been set aside for uplift infrastructure costs in years 2 and 3 of the programme. We estimate the costs will be more than the £200k we have been able to set aside therefore there will be additional pressures in future years*
- The budget for revenue contributions to capital would have been further increased to improve the sustainability of the capital programme and reduce borrowing costs in future years*

Following further questioning the panel were advised that there would be more improvements on offer if the precept had risen by £15 per annum rather than the maximum £10 permitted by Government.

With reference to maintaining the focus on reducing crime, the PCC felt this would be an area his successor would likely be focusing on. Due to financial cuts the PCC believed that the ability to reduce crime had been lost and this was a national problem that Central Government would need to put back in their sights.

8. Noting that 25% of respondents to the PCC's online survey did not endorse a financial uplift of £15 a year, what choices did the PCC scrutinise in order to arrive at the conclusion that **any** uplift was required?

Response from PCC

My treasurer has already explained that the consultation was based on a number of assumptions due to the delay in the police funding settlement and the precept 'rules'. Prior to launching the consultation, in close liaison with the Force, I considered the likely consequences of a wide range of precept levels – including raising by smaller and greater amounts.

The £15 figure was determined as, based on the assumptions at the time, this was the figure that would make good on the government's promise for an uplift in police officers in Dorset.

Given the eventual settlement, a balanced budget could be achieved with a £10 rise (a third less than that which had been consulted on). I was aware not only that the higher figure had been supported by 75% of respondents, but that an even greater number – 85% - believed that Dorset Police required extra funding.

From further analysis of the consultation – and not forgetting the hundreds of conversations that I had with members of the public – it was clear that, there was overwhelming support for paying more precept. Furthermore, the most important thing for Dorset residents – even if they didn't endorse a financial uplift – was to see more officers in their neighbourhoods. As I have said, to make good on the government's pledge of 50 new officers in Dorset, I concluded that the maximum flexibility on precept was required.

The panel members congratulated the OPCC officers for their public consultation exercise and for the quantity of responses.

9. What financial risk does the PCC see on the horizon for his successor, and what strategies has he put in place in order to manage these risks?

Response from OPCC Chief Finance Officer

There are a number of financial risks on the horizon. The medium term financial forecast shows substantial gaps over the next 3 years but this is based on a number of assumptions. There are risks around these assumptions such as the expected Spending Review over the summer and the confirmation of future years requirements for the uplift programme as the numbers have not yet been confirmed and there are suggestions that there may be top slices for higher threat areas. How national infrastructure such as the Emergency Services Network is funded could also increase costs in the future.

There may also be positive risks such as a review to the police funding formula. If it were similar to the last review and is actually implemented this could see additional resources coming to Dorset.

In terms of strategies to mitigate against the risks, a number of actions have already begun. In terms of the OPCC commissioning budget, the Commissioner has left £250,000 of commissioning funding for the new PCC to allocate as they see fit.

The Business planning cycle has already begun with a discussion at our Resource Control Board last week scenario planning and developing plans to balance the budget over the medium term.

In relation to the Capital Budget we have introduced a new Capital Strategy Group to address the risks within the capital programme and the impact this has on the revenue budget.

Reserves are the ultimate mitigation against financial risk therefore the approach to improving the resilience of our balances however possible is an important positive step

In response to panel questions, the PCC explained he would have a period of one week in post to assist the new PCC with ongoing affairs, this was the same as outgoing Members of Parliament. The incoming PCC would also be supported by the Office. His advice to his successor would be to listen to both

local and national advisors and undertake continual lobbying to get fairness in national funding for the force. He felt that his successor should bring modern investigation to fraud and recruit investigators to look at keeping the most vulnerable safe on-line.

The Panel Chairman (Mike Short) proposed supporting the PCC's recommended precept increase and this was seconded by Cllr Trent. The proposal was unanimously agreed.

Decision: that the Police and Crime Panel support the PCC's proposal to increase the precept for 2020/21 to £70,106,575, equivalent to a Band D charge of £240.58, an increase of £10 per annum or £0.83 per month

51. Lunch Break

The Panel took a lunch break from 12.00 to 12.40
At this juncture Cllr Trent left the meeting.

52. Nomination of Chair/Vice chair for 2020/21

Nominations were invited for the roles of Chair and Vice-chair for the Police and Crime Panel for the year 2020/21.

It was proposed by Cllr Bill Pipe
Seconded by Cllr Bobbie Dove

Decision: that Mike Short was appointed as Chairman for the year 2020/21

It was proposed by Cllr Les Fry
Seconded by Cllr Molly Rennie

Decision: that Cllr Bobbie Dove was appointed as Vice-chair for the year 2020/21

53. Police and Crime Plan Monitoring Report

The Panel considered a report outlining the progress against the Police and Crime Plan. The PCC introduced the item and announced that on finishing his second term, he had achieved 98 of the 100 commitments under his Police and Crime Plan, he thanked his team, Dorset Police and the panel members.

The monitoring report provided information on the financial outturn position for the Q3 period of the year, including updates on the following items which are listed under the relevant pillars:-

Pillar 1 – Protecting People at Risk and Harm – Cllr Mohan Iyengar.

Cllr Iyengar had recently been appointed to this pillar which was predominately focussed on a strategic approach to preventive work. He

referred to the classification of certain vulnerability groups, where efforts are concentrated and tied into the measures and scores.

Hate crime figures had gone down. Where there was discussion over precept figures and talk about officers on the beat, Cllr Iyengar noted also, that a lot of preventative work was hidden, especially when it came to fraud, however visible policing was still vital and he urged the PCC candidates to take note of that.

Financial cuts had reduced preventative work, such as education in schools etc. He was hopeful these roles would come back as an aid to early intervention strategies and that the new PCC would have a clear plan for this area on how to keep people safe, supporting vulnerability when it was needed most. The schools were a big growth area for crime prevention, it was regrettable that, because of the schools academy process, there was no co-ordinated scheme to take the project forward. A “one system” approach across all schools would help in education for preventative measures.

Pillar 2 – Working with our Communities – Cllr Les Fry and Cllr David Taylor.

Cllrs Fry and Taylor presented pillar 2 of the Police and Crime Monitoring Report.

In response to a question regarding supporting youth crime prevention, the PCC agreed that he would like to see more youth club facilities available. Unfortunately, there was no funding allocated to youth clubs but the OPCC could fund some limited initiatives in clubs to keep young people safe, especially with knife crime prevention work.

In relation to fly-tipping, the PCC advised that this was not a policing issue. The only instance where the Police could get involved with fly tipping was when it was actually taking place, the public could dial 999 and the Police would attend.

The minimum wage levels were discussed, and the point was made that the starting salary for a Police Officer was only £19,000, which would make it hard to get 50000 new recruits to meet Government targets. Following the 3-year degree apprenticeship those recruits would not be fully qualified until 2025.

A joined-up approach to reviewing crime education in school should go on the forward plan.

Pillar 3 – Supporting Victims, Witnesses and reducing Reoffending – Cllr Bill Pipe and Cllr Molly Rennie.

The PCC had supported the Sexual Trauma and Recovery Service (STARS) in setting up an office in Dorchester and encouraged them to develop a long-term business plan to allow the organisation to move forward. Cllr Rennie advised that the Domestic Abuse Forum had supported STARS and helped them to find premises and form relationships with other organisations

A response had been submitted to the Ministry of Justice consultation on the Managing Vulnerability: Women guidance, this would be shared with the other 3 pillar leads.

A visit to the Verne prison had been arranged and the findings would be reported back to the panel, Cllr Rennie thanked the panel for their help with gaining useful contact details.

Pillar 4 – Transforming for the Future – Iain McVie and Cllr Barry Goringe.

It was noted that the OPCC are in the process of recruiting a Complaints Review Officer. Legislation had gone live with Guidance and Regulations issued. This change may result in an increase in complaints.

A scrutiny review would be carried out at the end of the next financial year.

There was an outstanding scrutiny report relating to police bail which would be presented at the next meeting.

Members asked the following financial questions to the PCC:-

1. The chief constable's income has risen by £1.5m in year can the OPCC please expand on R3 and provide the detail on who provided this funding?

Response

£0.5m has come from additional government grants, such as the uplift grant and cyber-crime grant, that were announced or bid for after the budget was set

£0.5m has come from other organisations for officers on secondment. These include organisations such as the National College of Policing, National Police Air Service and Regional Organised Crime Units and will offset against the increased pay budgets.

£0.2m has come from the Commissioner for funding for a domestic abuse project, run by Dorset Police, in addition to the budget. Other additional income comes from the Driver Awareness scheme and other chargeable events such as Bournemouth Air Show.

2. The OPCC has stated that the BWV programme has been completed, yet there is an underspend in the programme. Can the OPCC please confirm if the programme is complete?

Response

Yes, the programme is complete and has been delivered under budget. ICT costs were lower than budgeted. The cost savings allowed the project scope to be extended to additionally provide a pool of BWV cameras for members of the special constabulary.

3. At the next Q4 meeting, the OPCC is requested to confirm the actual drawdown on reserves in order to offset the internal borrowing of £2.3m.

Response

At Q4 we will confirm the exact amount of internal borrowing required to fund the capital programme in the current year. We won't need to draw down on any of the reserves to fund this borrowing as it is the cash flow that will be used to fund the borrowing, rather than investing the money in accounts receiving low rates of interest.

In response to a question regarding drivers using mobile phones, rolling cigarettes etc when driving, the PCC advised that Police had invested heavily in the "No Excuse" road safety and road enforcement scheme and referred to Operation SNAP which was the response to the ever increasing request to submit video and photographic evidence from members of the public in relation to witnessed driving offences.

54. **Review on Elderly Victims of Crime**

The panel received an update on work undertaken to reduce the number of older victims of crime locally, including the role of Dorset Police, the OPCC and partners. The paper outlined current issues, work on action, prevention and commissioning in order to tackle these issues and possible future areas of focus.

The OPCC Chief Executive presented the report and highlighted that Dorset has a higher than average proportion of older residents, and the types of crime that older people are more vulnerable to, especially within the home.

Fraud was highlighted, and it was noted that the PCC and Sir Oliver Letwin had met with Commander Baxter, the National Coordinator for Economic Crime to progress this issue. It was also felt that the implementation of Regional Crime Units to investigate fraud would bring some further improvement, in due course.

In respect of Domestic Abuse crimes in 2.4 of the report, the introduction of a new vulnerability lawyer role within Dorset Police was noted, who could use tools such as Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) which have already proven useful in breaking the cycle of domestic abuse by providing short term, emergency protection for victims of domestic abuse. The work done to increase and improve reporting methods which had resulted in a modest increase of reported crimes was also noted.

The panel would like to see people being more tech-savvy with more protection on their devices and highlighted that it was better to try and prevent fraud before it happened, especially as there was a growing older population.

The panel noted the report.

55. Youth Offending

The Panel had been briefed on the work underway to reduce youth reoffending locally at their November 2019 meeting. The supplementary paper provided further detail on the involvement of the PCC and his office with these and other relevant services.

The paper highlighted the benefits of universal youth services and recorded the PCC's view that additional investment in these services was required.

There had been an increase in the number of first time entrants into the youth justice system in Dorset and the PCC's view was that this was partially due to a lack of preventative and protective youth services.

Youth offending was an issue best addressed in partnership, but there was currently no national or local strategy for youth services and as a result it was not clear which agencies should be held to account.

The OPCC Chief Executive stated OPCC was happy to consider running seminars or workshops, as the panel was in agreement that something needed to be done but noted that lack of money was the main issue.

The Chairman suggested that panel members and all councillors lobby local MPs on behalf of the Youth Justice system.

The Chief Executive was asked for a note on the possible implications of young people coming into contact with the criminal justice system, in terms of the impact on their careers, for example. Panel members highlighted that local authorities had made it clear they would not fund youth clubs but would fund services for young people.

It was suggested that the PCC and the Panel write to both councils to enquire if money could be earmarked in their budgets for young people. Panel members to be copied into correspondence.

Panel members noted the report.

56. Spotlight Scrutiny Review - Police Bail

Iain McVie advised that this was still an ongoing review and he would bring an update to the next meeting. He highlighted that national policy on this issue was in a period of flux and that this had led to potential amendments in his report.

57. Video Uploads Update

The panel received the following verbal update from the OPCC Director of Operations.

Operation Snap – Dash Cam Footage

As Panel members will be aware, Operation Snap is an initiative providing a secure online facility for the submission of video and photographic evidence relating to driving incidents. Operation Snap was launched on 31 July last year, with the support of the Department for Transport.

Operation Snap investigates road traffic offences such as dangerous driving, driving without due care and attention, careless driving, using a mobile phone handheld, not wearing a seat belt, contravening a red traffic light and contravening solid white lines, however this is not an exhaustive list.

It works by helping the Force deal with footage already recorded by members of the public in a safe and secure way, while making the investigation process simple and straight forward. The purpose of Operation Snap is not to ask members of the public to go out and detect offences for the police, but to deal with those already captured if possible.

There are a few criteria for uploading content to the Op Snap page – including that the registration number of the offending vehicle must be provided; and that the submitter should be over 18 and prepared to sign a witness statement and possibly give evidence in court.

Evidence is reviewed by Police Prosecutors to determine whether an offence was actually committed and whether the charging standards have been met. Footage that doesn't meet charging standards or where the vehicle registration number is unreadable will result in no further action.

For offences that do meet the charging standards, a Notice of Intended Prosecution is sent to the Registered Keeper and once a response by the driver of the vehicle has been received, they are offered one of three options:

- *Take part in a Driver Education course*
- *Accept a Fixed Penalty Notice*
- *Or go to Court (Depending on the severity of the offence which is determined by the Police Prosecutors)*

Since launch, Dorset Police received 243 submissions of photographic or video footage, which has resulted in the prosecution of 91 offences. 13 of which have attended a Driver Awareness Course, 8 have been passed to Court for processing and 20 have received a fixed penalty notice. The remaining 50 are at various stages of the ticket process.

152 resulted in no further action which is due to a combination of reasons, i.e. charging standards not met, not suitable for Operation Snap processing or unreadable vehicle registration plate. Operation Snap is not suitable for

reporting road traffic collisions or parking offences and due to legislative reasons, separate processes are available for these incident types.

In early 2020, Operation Snap will receive a further focus from Dorset Police Communications Team and the scheme will be re-launched with communications messages including footage of offences that have been prosecuted during the initial soft launch phase, which show bad driving behaviour. The communication messages will also include information about what type of footage Dorset Police can accept, what type of offences are covered under Operation Snap and how to upload the evidence. It is hoped to increase the number of offences that meet the charging standards and decrease the number of submissions that result in no further action.

Operation Snap is still in its infancy and work is ongoing nationally to enhance the system to improve the quality of submissions and increase the number of offences meeting the charging standards.

58. Workplan

The Chairman announced that the workplan was still work in progress, once it had been populated he would circulate to panel members.

59. Urgent items

There was no additional urgent business.

60. Exempt Business

There was no exempt business.

ANNEX 1

PCC's Precept speech.

ANNEX 2

Summary of Chief Constable's Letter to PCC

Duration of meeting: 10.00 am - 2.30 pm

Chairman

.....

PCC's Budget Precept introduction speech

Thank you Chair,

Members of the Panel,

Today I formally request that you consider my proposal to raise precept for Dorset taxpayers by 4.34% (£240.58) or the equivalent of £10 per year for a Band D property.

I will start today by laying out the current situation. I will of course include last year's precept rise in this scenario setting.

You will recall that last year I told this Panel and the public that a raise of £24 would achieve a balanced budget for one year and provide several new services. Last year was very much a case of telling the public "Pay more and get more".

And we did get more. The Chief Constable will shortly outline what our precept rise achieved, but first I want to quickly outline our current state.

Well, financially, we are still facing challenges. Unfunded national pay rises, inflation costs and other issues still threaten the stability of our finances.

We have seen a new Government arrive, a Government that has championed policing for the first time in a decade. We have a Chancellor who openly speaks about protecting the NHS and Policing. Never have I heard those words before as a PCC.

We have a Government who is replacing some of the officers that have been lost in austerity. As a Force we are expecting 50 new officers this year, with another 70 in 2021 and 50 in 2022 planned for, pending Government confirmation.

We have a Government who is also championing taser uplift, a subject we discussed earlier in public questions.

These are positive signs, but before I outline this year's proposals and reflect more fully on what this shift of attitude from Government might mean, I'd like to pass to the Chief Constable who can tell you about what the Force delivered with last year's precept rise.

(Verbal Update from the Chief Constable)

I will now outline the reasons why I have asked this year for a £10 precept rise.

This will be followed by my Director of Operations, who will briefly outline the results of the public consultation to assist your decision making.

My Treasurer will conclude with some further detail on the figures and the process, before we go into your questions.

Intrinsic to today's proposal are several points:

1. This proposal to raise, has come from a request by the Chief Constable. The original Chief Constable letter is lengthy and complex (12 pages, circa 6000 words), and contains a number of police acronyms and statements that presume a high level of background knowledge.

In order to enhance the transparency of this letter, and aid understanding, this has been summarised and additional background information provided. This summary will be appended to the minutes of this meeting, along with a copy of my speech.

Please note the bulk of the summary is directly copied from the Chief Constable's letter and is therefore written from his perspective. This letter was written prior to the announcement of the 2020/21 police settlement.

2. This proposal will provide the Force with a balanced budget for next year. The year after will still have financial challenges.
3. This proposal includes the new recruitment of 50 officers.
4. The requirement to secure a balanced budget means that unlike last year, all the public get is a balanced budget and the uplift of 50 officers. That is all.
5. This precept rise proposal, like last year, is announced by Government, not by me. The Government made the announcement in advance of this hearing today.

On the 21st January the Government announced in a Ministerial Statement:

“£1.1 billion - comprising £700 million grant and £400 million from council tax...”

6. Whilst we ponder this year's proposed £10 rise, I feel it timely to share my view on the Government's proposal. Because, as I started by saying, it is a Government proposal, not mine.

I struggle with this position. For the Government to assume I will raise the precept, and that you will approve that proposal, is not only an arrogant stance, it is also a bizarre way to run democracy. Cart before horse and all that. However, if I don't raise, policing will face more cuts.

Since 2017, this Government directive of huge increases in precept is a Treasury led strategy of securing public sector financing from local taxes. Do I agree with that? No, I don't, this should be centrally funded by the state. The longer this Treasury strategy continues, the more the balance of police funding moves towards localism rather than Westminster. In effect, if this continues, we will adopt the American model of poor communities having poor policing, and rich communities having better policing, because the local tax is more. I am sure you are aware that as a broad brush statement, poor underprivileged deprived communities in England and Wales receive far less from the policing precept than here in Dorset.

Merseyside, Northumbria, West Midlands to name a few all receive roughly 80% of their funding from the central Government, and 20% from precept. This means a precept rise raises less for their Forces than here in Dorset, where Government funding roughly equates to precept income on a ratio of 50/50.

On the face of it, you may think £10 is a huge settlement for Dorset Police. Actually, it just about leaves us in credit.

So let's look at our finances:

The achievements outlined in the current year have only been possible due to your support in raising the precept by £24 in the current year. This precept resulted in new income of £7.8m. Whilst that was a significant sum of money, it must be considered in the context of the overall financial pressures faced by the Force, and the increased costs mandated from elsewhere.

The financial pressures next year are even greater. If the police are to continue to provide the current level of service then another significant increase in resources from the precept is required.

This is despite the fact that the Force continues to look for every efficiency and opportunity for increasing resources. The bottom line still results in a requirement for a substantial increase in the precept.

The most significant element of our cost base is subject to pay and pensions increases and are beyond our control. Pay awards are negotiated nationally and officers and staff are subject to nationally imposed terms and conditions. In crude terms, almost all of the budget goes towards staffing and so, if we are handed unfunded pay increases or pension contributions it goes without saying that this causes a huge amount of additional strain.

Some of our challenge is because of capital financing. Capital financing costs need to increase further. Capital grant is expected to remain low, receipts from sale of premises are not expected to be significant and capital reserves are all but exhausted. We need to invest in our estate with an increasingly urgent need to provide alternative Headquarters accommodation. The Force aims to maximise the benefits afforded by their ongoing investment in mobile policing and agile working to make future estates investment as efficient as possible, as well as facilitating far better use of officers' time, enabling them to be fully mobile in the service they deliver. This will, of course, pay dividends in the medium term, when planned investments have been adopted.

Additionally, in relation to the Government uplift no funding surety for the long-term provision of these officers has been made. I've spoken before about the need for multi-year settlements, but sadly we continue to operate without certainty of supply. Not forgetting that as well as maintaining service levels, policing in Dorset needs to absorb the greater abstraction levels during the first years of officer training.

So, in summary, members what choices do we have here today?

Well firstly, I could do nothing.

That would leave roughly a £3.2 million hole in our finances, meaning that the Force would need to cut around 109 police staff jobs.

But, I hear you ask, why not use further reserves rather than cut staff? Well, as you know from the papers you have with you today, I have used reserves, and our General Balances are sufficient as an adequate contingency amount for unforeseen shocks but cannot afford to go any lower. Continued use of reserves is not sustainable.

If we do nothing, such cuts would most likely be directed primarily at police staff (including PCSOs) and capital investment, as I am restricted in my ability to reduce officer numbers due to the Government instruction to increase police officer numbers, and the associated requirements of the uplift grant.

Members would do well to consider that the Minister gave PCC's flexibility to rise up to a £10 precept to protect the Governments uplift of officers. To reject that call could affect overall policing numbers and remove front line officers to back room roles.

Secondly I could hold a referendum to raise more than £10

I do not consider this appropriate in the current climate

Thirdly – We raise by £10 and deliver a balanced budget. That is my recommendation here today.

So in closing, no bells and whistles this year, just a prudent budget that delivers 50 extra officers, and a manageable reserve of 3.2%.

There is an irony, that the budget I seek, the budget you will vote on, is for a new incoming PCC to administer. To those candidates seeking election in the back of this room, I issue words of caution. “Be careful what you wish for” when you make election pledges, as this Force has a tight budget, even with a £10 rise, with little room for additionality.

Before I go to your questions on this proposal, let’s just consider what our public think of a £10 raise.

[Verbal Update from Director of Operations]

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POLICE AND CRIME PANEL – 4 FEBRUARY 2020

BUDGET PRECEPT 2020/21

Summary of Letter from Chief Constable to Police and Crime Commissioner

Purpose:

To provide Panel members with a comprehensive understanding of the information contained within the letter from the Chief Constable to the Police and Crime Commissioner, regarding police precept and future budgeting.

The letter is detailed and complex (12 pages, circa 6000 words), and contains a number of police acronyms and statements that presume a high level of background knowledge.

In order to enhance the transparency of this letter, and aid understanding, this has been summarised and additional background information provided.

The bulk of the summary is directly copied from the Chief Constable's letter, and is therefore written from his perspective.

This letter was written prior to the announcement of the 2020/21 police settlement.

Summary of Letter

1. Introduction

I would like to formally thank you, through you the public, and the Police and Crime Panel for your support over the last year and, in particular, for your support concerning the increased precept for 2019/20. I would like to take this opportunity to explain how Dorset Police used the income from the precept for the benefit of our communities in Dorset. I would also like to explain our need for further investment in both core policing and in our specialist capabilities to ensure we continue to protect the public and meet emerging threats.

The requirement to make substantial financial savings to balance budgets over recent years, whilst dealing with a growing complexity of demand, has placed an enormous strain on policing nationally and Dorset is no exception to this. Indeed, the traditional low central funding of public services across Dorset, including Dorset Police, brings its own challenges. It is against this background that the Government's announcement to provide 20,000 additional police officers across the country has been welcomed. Obviously it will take time to recruit and train suitable candidates to these new posts but this focus on investing in police officer numbers is a positive development.

Last year's increase in the precept signalled by the Government, proposed by you and supported by both the public and the Police and Crime Panel, indicated a return to investment in frontline policing. I, and my colleagues, recognise the real pressures local people face in balancing their household finances and so it is important for us to continue to support you in helping people understand the difference the additional precept made.

2. 2019/20 Budget

Whilst the combination of income from the precept and a strong focus on driving out savings has allowed us to invest additional resources in some of our capabilities and to modernise aspects of our functions, it is important to emphasise that the majority of the income from the precept was needed to meet anticipated increases in existing costs, many of which have been decided by the Government.

The Government increased the contribution from Dorset Police to the national Police Pension Scheme by £3.1m and agreed a national pay award for the Police of 2.5%, effective from September 2019, which was unfunded. We anticipated a national pay award of 2%, at an expected cost of £2.1m. The national pay award is therefore costing Dorset Police £0.5m more in the current year than we expected when the budget was set. These costs are in addition to the annual pay increments of £1.3m.

Pay and pension costs therefore represent a £7.0m strain. Rather than the Government meeting the costs it imposed on the Police, it increased our grants by only £2.6m.

Furthermore, other pay and price rises were expected to increase our costs by a further £2.0m, when the budget was set. This included non-pay contractual inflation (e.g. increases in software licensing costs), additional costs of the national air support service and forensics and additional contributions to the police staff pension scheme.

Consequently, these pressures amount to a total of £9.0m, of which £8.5m was anticipated when the budget was set and the precept agreed.

The additional precept of £24 for a band D property for the current year has raised £7.8m of additional income. With the Government grant increase of £2.6m, this totalled £10.4m.

This leaves £1.4m of the additional precept for investment to address the increased complexity required of our services; investment in additional capabilities and investment in capital assets, most notably vehicles and ICT.

Dorset Police has an annual capital programme of £1.5m to replace vehicles and £3.0m for ICT developments and other equipment. We have nearly exhausted our available capital receipts and so we have had to identify alternative funding to finance our capital programme, which complies with the Prudential Framework. Consequently, the revenue budget included additional borrowing costs and revenue contributions to capital expenditure of £0.4m, as an essential step towards achieving a sustainable capital programme over the next few years.

3. Use of the 2019/20 Precept

I would now like to illustrate some of the benefits from the investment in our services which last year's precept has made possible.

Protecting people at risk of harm

Over the last couple of years, we have used the precept to develop our work with young people. We have safeguarded our Safer Schools provision by enabling ten officers to deliver educational and preventative activities to young people across the county. *[See Figure A].*

Furthermore, in the last year we have brought to fruition our aspirations to implement a Police Cadet Scheme, which aims to build the confidence of young people in Dorset, and help highlight policing as a potential career. The scheme was launched in September with the creation of two Cadet Units in Bournemouth, due to the original intention of having one Unit of 30 cadets being so heavily over-subscribed. We have recruited a Cadet Co-ordinator and we are looking forward to extending the Cadet scheme into other communities across Dorset. *[See Figure B].*

Over the last year we have continued to reflect on the potential harm to people in our rural communities and our marine community. Both areas have received continued investment in new officers. The Rural Crime Team (RCT) has been bolstered by an additional Police Officer and we have created capacity to develop the skills of an existing PCSO to support the current RCT PCSO during the current year. This enhancement to the size of the team allows it to engage more fully with our rural communities. We are also exploring ways to improve the effectiveness of the team by examining best practice elsewhere in the country. *[See Figure C]*.

Similarly, the size of the Marine Unit has been increased this year by an additional Police Officer. This officer is based in Neighbourhood Policing and will be heavily involved in both crime prevention and engagement with the marine community whilst working alongside a dedicated Marine Neighbourhood Engagement Officer.

A Street Sleeper Champion was delivered by the deployment of a Police Now Officer and NPT resources. Great progress has been made on entrenched street sleeping (63 people into sustained accommodation in a year) and we continue to progress even further with this initiative.

Working with our communities

Our Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs) are working with our partners to develop a multi-agency approach to address vulnerability within our communities. All of our partners understand that the complex problem of County Lines drug gangs requires a partnership approach. Nevertheless, Dorset Police takes the lead in tackling these gangs, which prey on vulnerable young members of our communities.

We have also continued to develop our Weymouth County Lines Team utilising existing NPT staff to focus on and tackle vulnerability. This team consists of a Sergeant and four constables. Through partnership working and directed problem solving to ensure we are adapting our working practices to meet the needs of our most vulnerable, we have arrested and charged a number of dangerous individuals. We have also removed a large number of weapons within circulation and, more importantly, safeguarded many vulnerable people at risk of criminal exploitation and harm.

We have appointed a Detective Superintendent to drive our work around vulnerability in our local communities. She is working closely with the Head of Public Protection to ensure we are effective in this area. The effectiveness of our approach has proved encouraging due to the results of a peer review undertaken by the National County Lines Coordination Centre. The Review concluded that Dorset is one of the most proactive forces in this arena within the South West. Despite this success, we are not complacent. We understand more needs to be done to address this issue and I expect to have to invest more resources to this issue in the future.

In last year's precept we referenced our Community Speed Watch (CSW) Team and our pledge to increase resource and outcomes. We now have 94 CSW teams with an additional six teams in development, totalling 100 within Dorset by the end of the financial year. We have also employed a full time Tru Cam operative to support the CSW and we are now sharing our CSW processes regionally as best practice.

Supporting victims, witnesses and reducing reoffending

Dorset Police continues to put victims at the heart of what we do. In the past the precept has been used to roll out restorative justice for a range of offences. The precept increase in the current financial year has been used to develop and commission the Bobby Van initiative. The Bobby Van is a mobile unit that provides home security, crime prevention advice and

reassurance for vulnerable members of the community and it is about to go live in Dorset. The van operator is able to provide practical help and support to people. The long term plan is for the Safer Dorset Foundation charity to raise sufficient funds each year to fund this service on a sustainable cost neutral basis. The service is pump-primed for two years. *[See Figure D]*.

As part of the work around prevention and problem solving we have redesigned the prevention team. Following an inspection by HMICFRS, as well as an OPCC deep dive, we were reassured that significant investment was unnecessary and that the operational teams were working well. We have increased the Integrated Offender Management team by one officer to ensure there is geographical capability across the whole of Dorset.

Transforming for the future

During the last year we have continued to develop our operating model. The latest development has seen fundamental changes to shift patterns, across the whole Force, designed to reduce the requirement for overtime by frontline officers by forensically aligning resources to demand. This will have a direct impact on costs and will represent an important improvement to the wellbeing of our people. Some overtime working will always be required to enable us to meet our responsibilities to deliver mutual aid support for major events across the country, especially in London and local events across Dorset, but we aim to keep the overtime at reasonable levels. Overtime is a very efficient way to manage surge and unexpected peaks in demand rather than having to resource the county according to risk.

We have also invested in new technology for frontline staff; providing them with additional ICT capability to enable access to Force systems whilst away from the station attending the homes of victims and also on the street. This improvement in capability will provide a more efficient and streamlined service for victims and means that officers do not need to return to the station to update Force systems.

Embedding Innovation

In order to increase the speed of transformation within Dorset Police, and to invest in the new capabilities required to respond to new and developing challenges, an Innovation Fund of £1m was created at the start of the current financial year. The Fund was created by earmarking £0.5m of existing reserves and balances to kick-start this initiative and by dedicating £0.5m of recurring budget to the Fund. The Innovation Fund is governed by an Innovation Board comprising senior representatives from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Dorset Police.

The Innovation Board considers all suggestions made by members of Dorset Police which might assist the Force in adapting and evolving to meet the challenges of the people and communities of Dorset. This work is managed and supported by a new Efficiency Officer post, funded through the precept. To date, over 80 separate bids have been submitted, of which 30% have progressed from an idea into a functioning deliverable outcome, whether that be a piece of kit / technology, a better way of doing something or a new post. A further 42% of the bids have been assessed by the board and re-directed to other areas of business with recommendations and appropriate support provided to the person submitting the idea. The remainder were found to either, mirror initiatives already occurring, consist of areas of business where the suggested development was already underway or were ideas effectively part of enhanced business as usual.

Below are a few examples of successful initiatives, supported by the Innovation Fund:

- Dorset Police is working with a defence systems supplier on the application of their artificial intelligence platform to policing, Whilst at the early stages, this has the ability to identify

patterns within our data records, highlighting persistent issues such as repeat victimisation and emerging threats such as changes in crime or incident types.

- Telephone statement taking has been fully operational in Dorset since October 2019, having been supported by innovation funding to purchase the software allowing members of the public to 'sign' a digital copy of their statement, and remove the need for this to be done face-to-face. Public feedback has been very positive to date.
- The 'da.advice' email pilot is an automated email facility that delivers initial safeguarding advice, links to support services and various .pdf attachments direct to a victims email. Whilst not designed to replace initial safeguarding given by attending officers, it can augment it in some circumstances.
- The Joint Response Unit brings to Dorset a response vehicle that is crewed by both a Police Officer and a Paramedic. In the three month trial, starting in November 2019, the vehicle was deployed to over 40 incidents where previously a resource from both Police and Ambulance would have been dispatched.
- The Bobby Van, launched in January 2020, focuses on elderly or vulnerable populations, and those who have been the victim of burglary. Such schemes have proved to achieve a measureable and lasting positive effect on domestic and distraction burglary elsewhere.
- Dorset Police has, for some time, been the only territorial police force in England and Wales without a volunteer police cadets scheme. The first two cadets units launched in September 2019, to very positive public feedback.
- Finally, a significant step was the funding of a Force Innovation and Efficiency Officer. The post holder represents the Force as an Innovation Broker within the College of Policing and takes an evidence based approach in seeking more efficient ways of operating, an important area being collaboration with other forces, academia and the private sector.

4. The financial outlook and precept requirement for 2020/2021 and beyond

The achievements I have already outlined in the current year have only been possible due to your support in raising the precept by £24 in the current year. This precept resulted in income of £7.8m. Whilst this is a significant sum of money, it should be considered in the context of the overall financial pressures facing the Force, and the increased costs mandated from elsewhere.

Whilst Dorset Police is very grateful for the level of support you provided in the current year and for the support of the Police and Crime Panel and the vast majority of the public who continue to be supportive of policing, unfortunately the financial pressures next year are even greater. If we are to continue to provide anything like the current level of service then another significant increase in resources from the precept is required.

The 2020/21 settlement from Government has not yet been announced and is very unlikely to be announced before January. My current estimate is that the Government grant will be increased by only 1.8% which does not keep up with the unavoidable cost pressures we face, inflation and the need to make considerable capital investments to maintain our asset base and to develop for the future.

Our capital grant from Government is likely to remain static again in 2020/21. Whilst there might be some funding of national policing, and that might alleviate local pressures to a minor

extent, there would be a significant shortfall to be funded by other avenues. This programme includes provision for ICT, fleet and estates maintenance and development.

We continue to look for every efficiency and opportunity for increasing resources; however, the bottom line still results in a requirement for a substantial increase in the precept.

There is some good news outside of the anticipated funding settlement. The Government has announced funds for an uplift in police officer numbers. Although at this time exact funding figures are not available, the Government's intention is that by the end of 2020/21 Dorset will have an additional 50 officers, taking the budgeted establishment to 1,250. This is clearly good news operationally and I will ensure the Force achieves maximum benefit from these additional officers. It is currently assumed that the cost of the officers, and all associated costs, will be met from the Police Officer Uplift Grant and as such both the costs and the associated grant have been left out of the figures shown in this letter. However, no funding surety for the long-term provision of these officers has been made.

When I presented the Medium Term Financial Plan last year, I included an assumption that a cap of a 2% increase (which equates to an extra £4.60 per annum) in the band D council tax would be imposed by the Government for the 2020/21 financial year. Forecasting the budget requirement and funding on this basis would generate an additional precept of £1.3m but it still presented a shortfall of £1.5m for 2020/21. Since then the anticipated shortfall in the resources available to Dorset Police has increased as a result of the various cost pressures, previously detailed. There is clearly a variety of options available to you in setting the council tax precept, each with its own implications for the Force and I would ask that each is considered against the total cost pressures of £5.3m.

In recent years, the Government has set the referendum threshold by reference to the cost of the increase in the precept to an owner of a band D property, rather than a percentage increase. I have therefore used this approach in the following table, which provides a high-level summary of the current projections of the additional funding that would be available at various increases in the precept. It also shows the increase in budget requirement, and the forecast shortfall or surplus at each funding level.

	Precept increase				
Annually	£0	£5	£10	£15	£17.30
Monthly	£0	42p	84p	£1.25	£1.45
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Central Grant	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
Precept	0.0	1.5	2.9	4.4	5.1
Total	1.2	2.7	4.1	5.6	6.3
Budget Requirement	5.3	5.3	5.3	5.3	5.3
Shortfall / (Surplus)	4.1	2.6	1.2	(0.3)	(1.0)

The above table illustrates that we would require a precept increase of just under £15.00 to fully address the current budget gap. However, I should stress that this is currently based on current assumptions concerning the settlement and the council tax base on which the precept is based. I fully appreciate that this represents a significant increase in our anticipated total funding.

My current projections suggest that an increase of this order would be required if we are to maintain current service levels, including supporting the provision of an additional 50 officers as provided for the separate funding. A precept level of this amount would enable me to continue to drive further efficiencies in service delivery through the modernisation of our technology. I believe this will pay dividends in the medium term, when our planned investments have been adopted.

A precept increase of less than £15.00 is likely to require cuts to our service delivery and/or our change ambition. Any such cuts would most likely be directed primarily at police staff (including PCSOs) and capital investment, as I am restricted in my ability to reduce officer numbers due to the Government requirements to increase police officer numbers, and the associated requirements of the uplift grant.

I fully appreciate the difficulty in explaining the size of the challenge and gaining public support to an above inflationary increase. The most significant element of our cost base is subject to pay and pensions increases, and is beyond our control. Pay awards are negotiated nationally and officers and staff are subject to nationally imposed terms and conditions.

As already mentioned, capital financing costs need to increase further. Capital grant is expected to remain low, receipts from sale of premises are not expected to be significant and capital reserves are all but exhausted. We need to invest in our estate with an increasingly urgent need to provide alternative Headquarters accommodation. We aim to maximise the benefits afforded by our ongoing investment in mobile policing and agile working to make future estates investment as efficient as possible, as well as facilitating far better use of officers' time, enabling them to be fully mobile in the service they deliver.

As you know, we are exploring every opportunity to identify savings and efficiencies to mitigate demand and this process will continue into the next financial year and beyond.

Based on my current expectations as to the content of the financial settlement, I believe the demands placed on the Force may require an increase in the precept to the maximum allowed before capping if we are to provide anything like the existing service levels, and take full advantage of the additional officer uplift funding, including the expectation of greater abstraction levels during the first years of officer training.

Whilst this above inflation increase may appear counter intuitive, it is very much a result of three distinct areas:

Continued real term reduction in government funding

Central funding becomes ever more complex with the Force receiving a combination of general and specific grant streams. However, my estimates suggest that a 1.8% increase in grant funding would bring the police grant to £60.0m, which represents £77.86 per person in the county and is the second lowest nationally. Nine years ago, the equivalent figure was £107.50. This is a £30 per head of population reduction in cash terms. In real terms the reduction will be over £40 per head of population.

Increased demand in volume and complexity

Some of the most demanding and complex crimes have risen considerably in Dorset and those increases are forecast to continue. For example, serious sexual offences, county lines linked offences, and serious violence have all risen in the last year. Investigating and prosecuting these more complex and harmful offences creates intensive demands on the Force and criminal justice partners. Many of the victims of those crimes are vulnerable and also need the Force and partners to put effective safeguarding plans in place.

Continuing financial pressures

It is clearly great news that the Government has signalled a reinvestment in policing with the promise of 20,000 additional police officers. I must point out that any central uplift which is not supported by inflation-proof rises in core grant and precept does not protect the Force against wider cost pressures and would mean further cuts would be necessary. This is also a more expensive and less efficient way of delivering policing services.

5. Conclusion

I would like to repeat my thanks to you, the public and the Police and Crime Panel for the confidence you have shown in recent years, in agreeing to substantial increases in the precept for Dorset Police.

I was disappointed that in 2019/20 the Government decided to push more of the burden for financing the police onto local council taxpayers. However, at least they gave clear guidance as to the scale of the budgetary challenge facing the Police at that time. I have detailed this challenge, caused by the increase in pension contributions, annual pay awards and increments. In Dorset this challenge is exacerbated by the lack of capital resources to secure the necessary investment in vehicles, estates and ICT, if we are to meet the challenges of modern policing.

I hope my expectations as to the financial settlement for the forthcoming financial year are proven to be overly pessimistic, but I would be surprised if that were the case. The scenario I have painted illustrates a precept increase of £15.00 which would be needed to balance the budget, based on these expectations. I will, of course, let you know if anything changes in the budget projections, as you consider the precept for next year. I am also happy to respond to any queries my letter may generate.

Appendix A: Images



Figure A: Safer Schools and Communities Team



Figure B: Dorset Police Cadet Units



Figure C: Dorset Police Rural Crime Team



Figure D: Launch of the Dorset Bobby Van Scheme

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