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DORSET POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 3 FEBRUARY 2022

Present: Mr Mike Short (Chairman), Iain McVie, Bobbie Dove (Vice-Chairman), Pete Barrow, Les Fry, May Haines, Mark Howell (attended virtually (did not vote) left the meeting at 12:10), Toby Johnson, David Taylor, Ray Bryan (attended as substitute, left the meeting at 12:10) and Graham Carr-Jones (attended as substitute, left the meeting at 12:10)

Apologies: Cllrs George Farquhar, Barry Goringe and Sherry Jespersen

Also present: Mrs Sam de Reya, Deputy Chief Constable, Dorset Police

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

Simon Bullock (Chief Executive, OPCC), Marc Eyre (Service Manager for Assurance), Jonathan Mair (Director of Legal and Democratic), Elaine Tibble (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Adam Harrold (OPCC Director of Operations), David Sidwick (Police and Crime Commissioner) and Julie Strange (OPCC Chief Finance Officer)

42. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on:

4 February 2020
24 September 2020
10 December 2020
4 February 2021
7 July 2021
12 August 2021 (informal)
23 September 2021 (informal)
9 December 2021 (informal)

were agreed and signed as a correct record.

43. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made at the meeting.

44. Public Participation

There were no statements or questions from Town and Parish Councils or the public at the meeting.

45. 2022/23 Budget, Precept and Medium-Term Financial Strategy

(00:06:15 on recording)

Following an explanation of the precept process from the Chairman, the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) was invited to present his 2022/23 Budget, precept and medium-term financial strategy.

The PCC was very clear that his plan was based on the people's priorities and what they wanted from the Force, these were to cut crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), more visible and connective policing, to fight violent crime and high harms, fight rural crime, to put victims and communities first and to make every penny count for Dorset. His vision was to make Dorset the safest county in the UK. The PCC invited the Deputy Chief Constable to address the operational vision for Dorset.

The Deputy Chief Constable gave apologies from the Chief Constable as he was unable to attend the meeting and addressed the Force's vision, purpose and priorities for the future. (00:13:25 on recording).

The PCC continued to address the budget report (00:26:31 on recording)

The PCC then invited his Director of Operations to give an overview of the precept consultation (00:29:40 on recording).

The Chief Finance Officer gave an update on the key points of the budget and a resume of the settlement which had been confirmed the date before the meeting. This was an annual settlement and therefore contained certain estimates and forecasts. In conclusion the panel members were advised that the Chief Finance Officer was content to assure that the budget was both adequate and robust. (00:34:33 on recording).

Following the budget report the panel members were invited to put forward questions. (00:43:36 on recording).

A copy of these questions and answers are attached as an appendix to these minutes.

Additional questions and responses can be found at (01:43:30 on recording).

The PCC was asked to provide more details regarding how he would measure success against the priorities in his Police and Crime Plan. He advised the Panel that that benchmarking would continue to be developed in the weeks and months ahead and that this would be shared with the Panel. The Chief Executive further commented that the OPCC would be happy to discuss this further with members, as happened previously.

Proposed by Cllr Dove, seconded by Cllr Haines

Decision: that the panel approve the PCC's proposal to increase the precept for 2022/23 to £77,929,644, equivalent to a Band D charge of £265.58, an increase of £10 per annum or £0.83 per month (3.9%).

46. **Comfort Break 12:10-12:30, on return the panel voted to extend the meeting**

47. **Nomination of Chair/Vice chair for 2022/23 (02:31:50 on recording)**

Proposed by Mr McVie, seconded by Cllr Taylor

Decision: that Mr Mike Short be elected Chairman for 2022/2023.

Proposed by Cllr Fry, seconded by Cllr Taylor

Decision: that Cllr Dove be elected Vice Chair for 2022/2023.

48. **Q3 Monitoring Report (02:33:12 on recording)**

The PCC presented the Q3 Monitoring Report, he highlighted and reported on each of his 6 priorities:

The panel members were invited to ask questions of the PCC (02:46:39 on recording).

49. **Fight Rural Crime Progress Report (03:50:30 on recording)**

The PCC presented the report, reducing rural crime was one of his priorities.

The PCC noted that, for quite some time, Dorset Police's Rural Crime Team had consisted of just two people – and was pleased that he had secured a commitment from the Chief Constable to considerably increase the size of this team.

The PCC, and his Office, were working to develop the first Rural Crime Reduction Board and scope the Country Watch scheme. He looked forward to sharing developments in this area with the Panel in the coming months.

Panel members were invited to address the PCC in relation to the report. (03:58:58 on recording).

50. **Complaints Process - Spotlight Scrutiny Review (04:13:39 on recording)**

Mr McVie presented a spotlight scrutiny review of complaints against police and complaint reviews. Overall, he was content with the process and that the Key Lines of Enquiry in the report had been addressed. The panel were advised of the recent number of cases and the response timescales.

51. **Complaints Update (04:23:46 on recording)**

Mr McVie advised the panel that there were no new or outstanding complaints.

Members were asked to ratify the current complaints protocol which was unchanged since last year and to appoint a Vice Chair for the sub-Committee.

Proposed by Mr Short, seconded by Cllr Dove

Decision: that the current complaints protocol was agreed.

Proposed by Cllr Dove, seconded by Mr McVie

Decision: that Cllr Haines be elected as Vice Chair for the PCP Complaints Sub-Committee.

Action: Cllr Dove asked Mr McVie to review the make up of the Complaints Sub-Committee.

52. **Dorset Police and Crime Panel Work Programme (04:26:46 on recording)**

The Service Manager for Assurance presented the PCP Work Programme which was noted by the panel and would be reviewed at a future internal meeting in March.

53. **Urgent items**

There were no urgent items.

54. **Exempt Business**

There was no exempt business.

**Appendix - Precept letter from Chief Constable
Panel Questions and PCC responses**

Duration of meeting: 10.00 am - 2.35 pm

Chairman

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Appendix

Chief Constable Scott Chilton MSt (*Cantab*)
www.dorset.police.uk

Mr D Sidwick
Police and Crime Commissioner
Dorset Police

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26 January 2022

Dear David

Police and Crime Panel, Future Budgets and Priorities

I write to formally request Dorset Police's budgetary requirements for 2022/23. Although the Government has agreed a 3-year settlement there remain considerable pressures on Police funding and a degree of uncertainty regarding long term financial arrangements. Dorset remains 42nd (out of 43) lowest funded Home Office forces and despite plans to review the national police funding formula there remains a significant shortfall in 2022/23 that can be addressed by the approval of the Police and Crime Commissioner to raise the Council Tax precept. This letter will explain the financial requirements and the improvements to policing that I will deliver in the coming years with an agreed precept increase.

I am grateful to you as Commissioner, in setting a clear, realistic and ambitious Police and Crime Plan. This plan accords not only with the public of Dorset's expectations but also very strongly aligns with my vision and priorities for the Force in the coming years. We will be tough on crime, keep people safe and put victims first. We have a shared ambition of making Dorset the safest county and to remain one of the finest police forces in the country.

Since taking over as Chief Constable in August 2021 I have worked relentlessly to assess the current capabilities of the Force to deliver the plan, identified and started to implement a road map to meeting it and ensured that I develop the strategy, priorities and infrastructure to deliver it. I have ensured a forensic examination of Force expenditure and identified where savings can be achieved and where we need to invest in transformation and new approaches. We will tackle developing crime threats and improve visible policing. I have a programme of work to invest more in the frontline with more officers tackling criminals head on who cause misery to parts of our communities, improved ways of being available to our public, ensuring a robust and dedicated focus for rural policing and relentless pursuit of organised

crime gangs involved in county lines drug supply. We are very much starting to see the benefits of this focus with falling crime levels, increased visible policing and some notable success in being tough on crime.

This budget request for this 2022/23 period will ensure we continue with this approach, but I recognise the importance of the continued need for me as Chief Constable to ensure every penny we have is spent wisely. It is critical that both you and the public are assured that the Force are efficiently using public funds. I have introduced tight regulations on spend and tasked my team to challenge costs to ensure we reinvest what we currently have in core budgets in areas that absolutely deliver the very best for our communities. I am requesting a £10 increase in precept for 2022/23. This funding will enable the Force to not only protect our current policing provision but also allow us to invest in a number of priority areas as follows:

- **Strengthened Response to Rural Policing** - Dorset Police will deliver the new rural crime strategy and uplift resources into the Rural Crime Team (RCT). This will expand our rural crime capability to tackle organised crime, protect business owners and those in isolated local communities. An investment in targeted engagement and prevention activity within these communities will reduce crime and increase public confidence.
- **County Lines Task Force** – Dorset is disproportionately targeted by organised crime groups and County Lines criminality yet in response we provide the highest level of disruption activity in the South West. I will invest in a new approach to targeting organised drug supply by introducing a dedicated co-ordinator, increasing proactive policing including days and weeks of action, working with forces across the UK to prevent offending in Dorset and continuing to work with our partners to reduce crime, protect the vulnerable and relentlessly pursue offenders, bringing them to justice.
- **Online Sex Offending** – Dorset has seen a significant increase in reported and proactive online sex offending. I will increase resources and online capability to protect and safeguard children from sexual predators. This will include preventing crimes, increasing proactive operations, improving the timeliness of investigations, safeguarding the most vulnerable and managing those offenders that cause the greatest harm to our communities.
- **Neighbourhood Enforcement Teams** – I will continue to embed local Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPT) in our communities by enhancing our capability with the introduction of Neighbourhood Enforcement Teams (NET). These local teams will provide an early response to emerging ASB and volume crime, pursue perpetrators and support long term problem solving to reduce harm to the public.
- **Violence Against Women and Girls** – Building on our strong strategic and local partnerships the Force will utilise innovative approaches and specialist resources to create safer spaces. This will ensure people feel safe on our streets and support the protection of women and girls from such threats as gender-based violence, sexual assault and drink spiking.

- **Safer Roads** – Through our operational and strategic road safety response the Force will work to further reduce those killed and seriously injured on the roads through investment and hotspot policing. This will involve the latest use of technology and the development of preventative online education.
- **Responding to the Public** – I will advance the way the Force responds to calls for service over the course of a multi-year transformation programme which will overhaul public engagement and contact management systems. This will improve accessibility, including online reporting, live chat messaging, ‘pop up’ community contact hubs and improved services to 101 and emergency response.
- **Crime Investigation Standards** – The development of the force crime investigation capability will continue to improve timely prosecutions through investment in digital evidence, reducing bureaucracy and allowing the public to submit evidence online. We will strengthen our victim and witness hubs to ensure those individuals are at the heart of what we do.
- **Volunteering** – I will further expand the volunteering capability in the Force through growing our established Cadet schemes, uplifting Special Constables and introducing wider volunteering to deliver increased visibility and connectivity within our communities.
- **Investment in Estates** – I will facilitate urgent investment to estates, creating more efficient and cost-effective solutions to workspace, increase ‘new ways of working’ and deliver improved working environments to support our staff and officers and maximise outputs. Benefits include improving our visible policing presence by developing more agile community police surgeries and work with partners and communities to further increase our policing footprint especially in rural towns.
- **Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) and Cyber Crime** – I will ensure that SOC capability within Dorset is increased, bringing regional assets closer to the Force to enhance our ability to combat some of the most dangerous offenders in or entering our County. This will enable us to provide a better, locally delivered, service to the communities of Dorset.

Funding background

The Force is funded by a combination of Government grant and Council Tax. The majority of Government grant increase received in 2022/23 is expected to be focussed on delivery of the Government’s manifesto pledge to deliver 20,000 new officers nationally. This will enable the Force to enhance some of its services to the public and increase visibility within the community.

The increase in Government grant will not cover unavoidable cost increases such as inflationary pressures and enabling costs such as recruitment, training and development, ICT, estates and fleet. The Force is dependent on Council Tax to cover these unavoidable increases. Without such an increase, reductions in service will be required to achieve a balanced budget which will significantly reduce the impact of the incoming officers within our communities.

The financial outlook for 2022/2023

The financial plan enables us to deliver a balanced budget in 2022/23, which assumes a £10 precept increase to cover the inflationary pressures mentioned above. The key risk to our plan is the level of pay reviews for officers and staff, although we believe the assumptions made are reasonable.

Our plan includes cost savings of £1.9m. This has, in part, come from the reductions in the cost of the Uplift programme as well as negotiated savings in regional funding arrangements. We have also realised £0.3m in savings from ICT and rent/rates of premises. £0.8m of this overall saving has been reinvested in a number of areas most notably domestic abuse, firearms licencing and road safety.

A further £0.7m increase in capital financing charges are included in the budget, which reflects the increasing need to borrow to fund part of our capital programme, and to increase our revenue contributions to ensure long term sustainability.

Continuing financial pressures

Whilst we expect to be able to deliver a balanced budget during 2022/23, there remains medium term financial pressures which drive a projected deficit of £2.6m per year from 2023/24. We will continue to explore every opportunity to identify savings and efficiencies to mitigate demand. This work will start immediately during 2022/23 to maximise the chance of successful delivery. Areas of focus will include savings from the change programme (including use of technology and process automation), reviews of discretionary spend as well as ways of banking benefits from the investment in officer uplift.

The risks to policing delivery if the Force does not receive an increase to precept include:

- If the precept was not increased a financial shortfall of £2.9m would be created, significantly impacting our effectiveness in keeping people safe. This funding equates to a reduction of 63 officers or 75 staff posts in real terms.
- The Force would be unable to make the investments in line with the ambitious plans outlined earlier in this letter, and we would need to withdraw from some frontline services currently being delivered.
- It would severely restrict opportunities to invest in innovation to deliver future sustainable efficiencies.

Capital requirements

As already mentioned, our capital financing costs will increase in 2022/23 as we continue to move to a more sustainable capital financing model. It remains our aim that all short-life fixed assets, such as ICT and vehicles will be financed from revenue contributions to capital. This would mean borrowing for longer term assets such as the estate. This strategy has been developed because Dorset Police has no capital reserves and very little surplus property, which could be used to generate capital receipts.

In order to minimise the impact on the revenue budget, we have reviewed the capital programme of the Force in detail with the aim of reducing it to the minimum required to be an efficient and effective Force. Despite these reductions the five-year programme, up to and including 2025/26, still totals £46m, of which £24m relates to the estates programme.

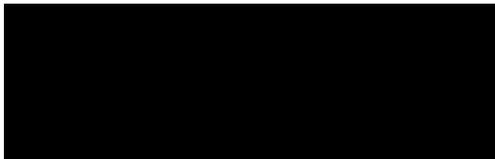
Conclusion

I would like to thank you and the Police Crime Panel for your ongoing support in ensuring that Dorset Police is appropriately funded to deliver a safe county for everyone.

I am committed to making every penny count through our efficiency programme and those savings will optimise our operating model, which is delivered via our continuous improvement and transformation programme. Further to this operational investment, additional funding is also required to meet other nationally agreed commitments such as pay awards, incremental pay progression and the significant inflationary pressures being experienced by all organisations across the UK.

Despite the challenges ahead, with the addition of the precept increase, Dorset Police is in a strong position to make progress in delivering the Police and Crime Plan, reducing crime and making Dorset a hostile environment for those who seek to commit crime and target the vulnerable. The Force continues to maximise the opportunity provided by the Government's National Uplift programme, however this is not the only answer to overcoming the financial challenges that we face.

Yours sincerely



Scott Chilton
Chief Constable

APPENDIX 1

Progress against the Police and Crime Plan

Cut Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour

The Force has seen a 6.0 per cent drop in recorded crime, (Office for National Statistics – last 12 months to the end of June 2021), and has the ninth lowest crime rate in England & Wales. Whilst we recognise the impact of COVID-19 throughout the last year and the effect the lockdown periods had on the reduction of some crime types, we have also responded to this and maintained a strong focus on the preventing and detecting of crime that affects the most vulnerable members of our communities, for example, Domestic Abuse, serious sexual offences and violent crime.

In terms of more specific crime data, we have seen a reduction in violence against the person offences with a reduction of 1.9 per cent in Dorset compared to an increase nationally of 8.1 per cent. Violence with injury dropped by 7.0 per cent, compared to the national average that was down by 4.0 per cent. Victim Based Crime saw a reduction from 46,116 to 42,972; a reduction of 6.8%.

The total number of crimes reported reduced from 51,997 to 48,873 over the 12 months to the end of June 2021, reducing 4.0 crimes per 1,000 of the population. The Force has supported and safeguarded the most vulnerable in our communities and provided a safe environment for victims and encouraging them to come forward and report crimes.

The Force has also seen increased large-scale public events, including the European Football Championship and the Bournemouth Air Show, and the return of a lively night-time economy, which has contributed to an increase in some crime types. We continue to work with our partners and local businesses to address local needs and keep people safe in Dorset.

Make Policing More Visible and Connected

The Force is committed to building trust and confidence by engaging and partnering with our communities. Our communities need to have confidence that we are fair, open, accountable and legitimate through inclusive policing, and in return we are focused on understanding, listening to, and responding to the communities we serve and ensuring we deliver a targeted response to emerging issues and risks. In recognition of this the Community Safety Survey for 2020/21 showed that ninety-six per cent of Dorset residents stated that they felt safe in their communities. The survey also showed significant improvements in how the public views the police, with an average of 79 per cent of respondents feeling that Dorset Police is doing a good job, which is an increase from the previous year at 55 per cent. There was also a rise in public confidence to 79 per cent, an 11 per cent improvement in the last year.

Furthermore, 77 per cent of respondents stated that they feel relations between people and the police in their neighbourhood is good, a 19 per cent increase in the last year.

When asked if Dorset Police is 'doing a good job', respondents from all county areas responded positively and reported an overall increase. For example, East Dorset reached 88 per cent, an increase of 24 per cent from the previous year.

There are a number of areas which have helped achieve these results, and these include the changes to the Force operating model and the creation of two local policing areas, aligned to the local authority areas. These were created to provide delivery of Local Policing and improved engagement, strengthening meaningful partnerships, and increasing performance.

Through the Government Uplift programme, we are increasing the size of our neighbourhood policing teams with additional officers so they can focus on local issues including making safer spaces in our response to violence against women and girls. In addition, the introduction of Neighbourhood Enforcement Teams are providing a proactive arm to tackle crime and Anti-Social Behaviour and support local policing teams and partners to develop long term problem solving, for example County Lines enforcement and safeguarding.

The next stage of our continuous improvement strategy is the review of public contact and engagement. This is focused at the front end of our delivery – as within policing everything we do has an impact on someone, from the phone calls, emails and contacts we receive, to the actions and decisions we take. The service we deliver to respond to the public is crucial and the focus on this large piece of work.

Fight Violent Crime and High Harm

As a Force we relentlessly pursue criminality. We are robust with high harm offenders, prevent reoffending and bring offenders to justice. Our whole Force approach ensures offenders are dealt with in a timely manner to support and protect victims and witnesses, through the criminal justice process or by supporting victims to achieve other positive outcomes.

However, we know that a small proportion of offenders (around 9%) are linked to 85% of total harm. To target this, we have a highly effective Fugitive Management Team who are a dedicated team of officers and staff within the Intelligence directorate who provide ownership and grip of these offenders. Dorset already has the highest numbers of organised crime disruptions of all the South West forces. We will continue to meet the growing threat of organised crime and this includes increasing the size of our Serious and Organised Crime capability to relentlessly pursue criminals and protect the public from new and emerging threats.

They are also focused on foreign offenders, and we work effectively with partner agencies such as National Crime Agency, Interpol and the Prison and Probation service. We carryout offender visits and neighbourhood policing teams are involved to ensure increased awareness on intelligence and disruption activity.

Dorset is leading on a voluntary tagging programme which we introduced in 2021 and where Domestic Abuse perpetrators are GPS tagged and subject to monitored, proactive intervention then takes place to prevent further offending and reduce subsequent demand.

Fight Rural Crime

We are strengthening our response to Rural Crime by delivering a new rural crime strategy and increasing the number of officers and staff working in our Rural Crime Team. As an already effective team, the increase in size will ensure they are focused on tackling organised rural crime, able to increase their engagement, and ensure they are more visible in isolated and rural communities.

Our Intelligence Directorate provide resources to prevent and target rural crime, and our neighbourhood teams work closely with the rural crime team to provide further engagement and visibility to our isolated communities.

The work to fight rural crime is also supported by our Alliance Operations Command, and the work of Firearms Teams, the Force Support Group, the Marine Section (recognising our marine communities), our Drones team, Roads Policing and Dog Section. This is further supported by the volunteers, Special Constables and Cadets who are part of the Dorset Police family and who contribute to delivering across all communities in Dorset and support the dedicated work to rural communities.

Put Victims and Communities First

Since November 2019 the Force has led a Vulnerability Programme which has focused on vulnerability and protecting people at risk of harm, particularly victims. The Force has experienced an increase in demand in the area of public protection. Some of these increases are as a direct consequence of our staff being trained in vulnerability and safeguarding and so recognising at an early stage the need for support safeguarding and positive interventions. The Vulnerability Programme within Dorset Police has received national recognition from the National Police Chiefs Council for Vulnerability, Knowledge and Practice team.

This positive work continued throughout the COVID pandemic with ongoing training and changes to process and systems. The COVID pandemic has seen a changing demand on our services from societal changes, so external pressures and increased workload on the Force.

We have invested in external experts to improve our response and we are working with the charity 'Missing People UK' who are supporting our improvements in our response to instances of missing persons. We have delivered Operation Encompass which provides the sharing of information with over 300 schools across the County to keep children safe. We have increased the use of Civil Orders including Domestic Violence Protection Orders with enhanced training to officers which has resulted in a 75% conversion of notices to full orders.

Moving forward we are continuing to develop our operating model to address vulnerability within the system and provide an ever-improving service and outcomes to victims. We are aligning Safeguarding to work closer to neighbourhood teams and local partners within our Local Policing Areas, developing our management of sexual and violent offenders, and realigning the Paedophile Online Investigation Team and Child Abuse Investigation into our new Specialist Investigations directorate.

We recognise that domestic abuse is a big part of protecting people at risk of harm and reducing repeat victimisation. We are working to ensure our response to domestic abuse and violence against women and girls and we have uplifted our response to these areas. This includes the commissioning an external review of our response to Domestic Abuse, and the adoption of the DA Matters Programme. We have invested in dedicated Vulnerability Lawyers who are focused on the ever increasing use of Civil Powers such as Domestic Violence Protection Orders, Stalking Protection Orders and Sexual Harm Prevention Orders to keep vulnerable people safe and reduce the risk from dangerous offenders.

We have built upon our strong partnership with the existing 'You First' Domestic Abuse programme to introduce across Dorset the Home Office endorsed 'DRIVE Domestic Abuse perpetrator programme. This is making a real difference to support Domestic Abuse perpetrators to change their behaviour and so keep victims safe by preventing an escalation of violence. This programme has a strong evidence base nationally and we are seeing similar if not better results than other areas across England and Wales who are delivering DRIVE. DRIVE also complements the CARA conditional cautioning programme and Footsteps vulnerable female perpetrator programme which we also run across the Force to divert offenders and prevent reoffending.

Make Every Penny Count

Dorset Police is committed to ensuring value for money in all of its activities. The Force works in partnership wherever this will achieve efficiencies, with the Strategic Alliance at the heart of this collaborative work. 27% of our Force budget is spent on Alliance areas, achieving financial savings, economies of scale, and providing the ability to shared best practice.

Dorset Police is a member of the South West Procurement Partnership, which also includes Devon & Cornwall, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and - since 2021 - Avon & Somerset, which has further strengthened this collaborative working. The Partnership secured savings for Dorset Police of over £0.6m during 20/21 and is on course to realise further savings this year. The Procurement Partnership also works closely with Blue Light Commercial, which is designed to harness the purchasing power of policing on a national basis.

As part of the Spending Review 2021, the need for forces to evidence efficiencies was made clear, with the expectation that forces would need to achieve £100m in annual efficiencies by 2024/25. Dorset is well placed to achieve its contribution to this target, and more, having achieved £1.9m savings in the 2022/23 budget, and the

expectation that further efficiencies will be made through such programmes as robotic process automation.

I know that the Police and Crime Panel have previously been keen to ensure that the Force is continuing to be innovative in its approach, and I am sure that you would expect the same. The Innovation Board, which is a joint PCC / Force Board, will continue, with funding to support initiatives built into our medium-term financial plans.

Item 5 – BUDGET

1. The panel notes that the PCC intends to borrow £29m over the next 3 years for the Capital programme. The PCC has stated that “There is a proposal for a new headquarters building at Winfrith, however, the new building will not be funded by precept”. How will this borrowing be paid for if it is not from taxation and how will interest rate risk be mitigated? **(Cllr Barrow)**

For the benefit of those who may not have seen our recent announcement, the Chief Constable and I have recently agreed a programme of investment in the police estate – so this covers both upgrades and improvements to local police stations as well as decision to replace the headquarters itself.

The investments in local stations such as better technology, more lockers and flexible working spaces will help officers reduce their time in stations each shift, plus will provide respite areas to help them deal with the aftermath of traumatic incidents.

These steps are being taken to improve connectivity between communities and their police. The public have repeatedly told me that they want to feel more connected to their police and that visibility is something that they wish to improve. These improvements, along with the ongoing recruitment of extra officers and better mobile technology will enable Dorset Police to better meet those expectations.

The current 60-year-old headquarters building at Winfrith costs more to maintain than it would do to knock down and replace with a more energy efficient and sustainable building – and so we have agreed a programme for this to be achieved.

I confirm that investment in capital assets such as the police estates does not take funds away from the funding of police officers, as this is a revenue cost.

In terms of the question, the capital funding element of the Estates Futures programme will be funded from borrowing – and Police and Crime Commissioners, like other public bodies, are able to secure loans through the Public Works Loan Board, a HM Treasury backed body that exclusively lends funds to public bodies, at preferential rates in order to maximise taxpayer value and mitigate rate risk. The revenue implications of this have been factored into the Medium Term Financial Plan from 2024/25.

Our financial assessments therefore highlight a modest cost to the Dorset taxpayer over the potential loan period. In comparison with the cost of keeping the current Headquarters building fit for occupation, which is essentially ‘dead money’, the relative affordability of a loan is a much more favourable option.

2. It is generally accepted that the UK is moving into a “cost of living crisis” and 33% of respondents to the PCC’s online survey did not endorse a financial uplift of £10 a year. What does the PCC say to the vulnerable in Dorset who may have difficulty in funding this uplift and how does the PCC intend to fund his plan without looking to continually maximise increases in precept? **(Cllr Ray Bryan)**

The more vulnerable in our society are also the most at risk of crime, so I say to them that the Plan is something we will deliver, especially for them.

The affordability of a tax increase is one which any precepting authority takes seriously, and I know that Council members will also have carefully considered this within their own authorities. In terms of police precept, PCCs have asked and been assured that Government, in setting the limits for local taxation, has undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment to understand the feasibility of the £10 average increase. It is worth remembering that whilst Band D is the national average, the most common band within Dorset is Band C, and 56% of properties are in Band A to C.

To the public I say: "I would dearly have loved not to have to come to you to ask for any extra money to pay for policing, but the simple truth is that if I am to deliver on the priorities that you told me are important to you, then I will need every one of those 83 pennies.

"I want this county, our county, the country we all love, to be the safest place in England and Wales but to do that I need to make sure the Force is adequately funded and so that's why I asked for your support when it came to the precept increase."

In terms of future years, I note that Government has – for the first time – given PCC's notice of the precept flexibility it intends to offer in future years – this is a maximum £10 increase for this year, next year, and for the year following.

We must play the cards we are dealt, and those are my cards. I have a clear plan that will make vulnerable people safer, and the support of our communities to deliver that plan. It is therefore unfortunate that I must maximise precept this year, I hope very much to not have to repeat this in future years but, of course, that will depend on the circumstances at the time.

3. The Govt Minister has stated that he expects this increase in funding must also result in police leaders becoming more efficient and effective with officers' time. How does the PCC intend to ensure that this happens and how is he going to measure output effect? **(Cllr Johnson)**

The idea of productivity and demand measurement is one the Panel has raised previously, and my position is that it would be preferable for a national framework for this assessment to be developed rather than individual Forces determining their own.

The latest position on the development of this national work is that the Home Office is trialling a 'Police Activity Survey' in 7 Forces, starting from next week to replace the out-of-date 'Activity Based Costing' data. At the same time the Home Office and NPCC has commissioned an analysis of non-crime data from Forces, which is underway at present.

Until such time as the results from this research is developed, we will continue to assess Force activity using our well-established internal processes, with support from some new external tools.

Internally, our change and transformation board, PRISM, continues to have strategic oversight over opportunities to further develop and invest in processes and technology which will free up police officer time and improve efficiency. Specifically, we have initiated a three-year transformation programme to keep officers on the frontline through investment in technology, including:

- *Office 365 – through issuing personal issues laptops and mobile device upgrades,*
- *Pronto – the Force’s mobile application suite that allows officers to undertake a range of tasks on the go – including being able to scan fingerprints at the side of the road through new biometric fingerprint readers, and*
- *QlikSense – an enterprise reporting system that allows supervisors and managers access to a performance dashboard giving them better insight into the activity and outputs of their team.*

Also, the Strategic Performance Board remains the key mechanism by which I consider the key output metrics of crime and incident outcomes, as set out in my Police and Crime Plan, and the Government’s Beating Crime Plan. This is now supported by the ‘Digital Crime and Performance Pack’ – a new online tool produced to aid Ministers and PCCs with their scrutiny, and which launched at the beginning of this year.

4. The panel has been informed over the years that all areas for savings have been identified. The report states a total of £1.9m savings will be secured through removal of long-term vacant posts, more efficient training processes, reduced ICT costs and reduced costs through regional working. Why have these only been identified now and why is there a further £0.5m of unidentified (but risk-assured) savings? **(Iain McVie)**

I can assure Members that the Force budget is rigorously scrutinised throughout the year, and every opportunity is taken to drive out savings and efficiencies.

In year there are several factors that are taken into consideration, and I am confident that all opportunities are considered and scrutinised at the Resource Control Board and the Capital Strategy Group.

For example, vacant posts are reviewed regularly and removed should they remain unfilled in the long-term, but this happens infrequently as we rarely get to that point. In terms of the most recent savings, these have mostly come from further optimisation brought about by the impact of the pandemic on our ways of working – as some training has been refreshed for delivery over video rather than face-to-face, thereby reducing costs, and savings have been made in ICT costs (both hardware and licensing) as many staff previously had both desktop PCs and laptops, and desktops have now largely been removed across the police estate.

The Chief Constable has reinvigorated the cost challenge process, and the £0.5m cost-savings relates to the Force's in-year target. This is a similar target that has been put in place, and achieved, in recent years, and so – whilst we do not currently know precisely where the savings will come from – we can be confident that the target will be achieved.

5. The Police and Crime Plan Reserve was due to be nil by 2022. This has now been extended to 2024. Could the PCC explain the reasons behind this change?
(Cllr Carr Jones)

This is due to the impact of the pandemic. The reserve was due to be managed down to a level of around £500k by mid-2020, and then handed over to a new PCC following the 2020 election, to allow him or her to pump-prime delivery against their new police and crime plan. The anticipation was, therefore, that it would diminish during 2021 and be nil by 2022.

However, the impact of Covid-19 meant that, not only, did this deadline need to extend by a full year due to the delay of the PCC election, but also, the reserve needed to be increased in size and further extended due to the requirement to support delivery after central funds which were made available during the height of the pandemic ceased.

6. Given the size of the non-pay budget, is it realistic to have no general provision for inflation and what level of inflation has been allowed for the specific areas of inflation mentioned in 4.6. What sensitivity testing has been done around these costs?
(Cllr Haines)

Inflation has been allowed where there is clear and specific inflationary pressure, including 17% for vehicle fuel, 15% for electricity, 77% for gas and 5% for water. These percentages are based on latest contract information. What has not been allowed is a general inflationary increase on budgets such as stationary. Any increase in costs is expected to be managed by budget holders through improved procurement. These budgets have all been reviewed against prior years spend to ensure that this is still a reasonable approach.

7. Given the 4.5% increase in Govt grant this year, why does the PCC feel it is appropriate to levy the maximum allowable increase in precept? What does he feel is the right balance between local and national funding, and is there any strategic aim to work towards this?
(Cllr Fry)

- *Response is at (01:18:550 on recording)*

8. The reserves strategy and modelling show that most earmarked reserves will be spent over the MTFP period. How does this affect resilience? Which risks will be higher if the PCC is unable to mitigate them through use of reserves against a backdrop of increases in budget requirement over the forthcoming years? **(Cllr Barrow)**

The main indicator for resilience within policing is that the general reserve should be between 3% and 5% of net revenue expenditure, rather than earmarked reserves which are for specific purposes. Based on the current forecast variance at year end, the general reserve will be within the parameters, and therefore not a concern from having adequate levels of reserves.

Clearly, a higher level of reserves would create greater levels of resilience and over the course of the Medium Term Financial Plan I am planning to increase reserve levels but this needs to be balanced with the requirements of delivering services for the people of Dorset. There may be opportunities to accelerate this as the economy recovers from the pandemic and things such as the collection fund returns to delivering a consistent surplus again.

9. What work is being done to rationalise the existing estate/asset base and is it appropriate to start to include financial assumptions about more efficient use of physical assets and potentially the capital receipts reserve? **(Cllr Howell)**

Changes to estate are complex, require considerable capital investment and can be many years in the making while consideration of options including improvement, new construction or disposal takes place.

That said, the significant bulk of the rationalisation of the DP asset base has already taken place, and the 2020-2025 Asset Management Strategy highlights only two remaining properties that are earmarked for future disposal – the stations at Christchurch and Wimborne, both of which are not centrally located in their populations, and are due to be replaced with more flexible options, which will better serve local communities.

Therefore, I am afraid that it is not appropriate to include financial assumptions bought about by the disposal of assets in the capital receipts reserve – as we have already taken those efficiencies. As and when further receipts are received, I will need to carefully consider how they are used to best effect, as there are unlikely to be any other receipts to replace them.

10. How has resource allocation changed across the Service with the incoming PCC and his own plan? **(Cllr Taylor)**

There has been a significant change in prioritisation, and members of the public will have noted a renewed focus on areas such as cutting crime and ASB, for example.

However, changes to resource allocation will continue to be made on an incremental basis, given some 85% of the Chief Constable's budget is made up by pay and employment costs.

My team has also previously highlighted to the Panel that it would be unwise to begin with trying to land wholesale change across as large and as complex an organisation as Dorset Police, without first taking smaller steps to effect change – which also may not necessarily cost money – and therefore an initial focus on policy and systems changes is one I support.

Item 8 – Qtr 3 Report

- *The Police and Crime Plan states that the PCC will “work with criminal justice partners”. Magistrates are to get greater sentencing powers so as to cut the backlog in the courts – how is the OPCC engaging with the Dorset Magistracy in order to gain information on crime trends, cut crime and assist victims?*

You will be aware that I have already taken up the Chair of the Dorset Criminal Justice Board – something which I pledged to do within my Police and Crime Plan and ensures that the approach taken in Dorset mirrors that of many of my counterparts. The Board has a membership that includes a wide array of CJS partners, such as the Crown Prosecution Service, police, probation, the courts and the Chair of the Dorset Bench among others.

The vision of the DCJB is to deliver, in partnership, the highest quality criminal justice service for all. A key component of this – and one that is reflected within the priorities of the Board's work – is to deliver an effective, efficient and high-quality criminal justice system in Dorset. There are many strands to this work, but key areas of focus include developing a better understanding of the demand coming into and across the system; working together to reduce the backlog of cases; taking advantage of new technology and best practice wherever we can; and improving investigative quality.

This work is extremely complex and the reasons for the backlog in the courts are multi-faceted, part of a national problem and, it should be said, something that pre-dates the COVID-19 pandemic.

Indeed, while there are a number of well-established groups that are working together to improve systems in Dorset and the wider Wessex region, of which we are a part, I am afraid that some of the chief causes of court delays must be addressed at a national level. There are shortages within the court system that need intervention. To that end, the Wessex PCCs have agreed to jointly raise matters with the Ministry of Justice so that we can ensure that, firstly, there is no doubt about the challenges faced in Wessex, but then also, so that we can understand what the plans are to address these backlogs and ensure that justice is done.

Of course, none of that is to say that partners will not continue to push hard to make those improvements that are within our gift. For instance, Dorset Police's Witness Care Unit are working tirelessly to ensure that witnesses are kept up to date and engaged so that cases do not falter; the Tri-Force has been working on action plans for Domestic Abuse and Rape and Serious Sexual Offences to make sure that investigative standards are as high as possible; and I have also raised concerns about delays associated with the National Referral Mechanism following a meeting with Dorset's judges. These are just three examples – there are dozens and dozens more.

However, while myself and partners will continue to drive this agenda forward as best as we can, I do have to be clear that, as a Police and Crime Commissioner, my ability to address this situation is limited.

- How is the PCC ensuring that the Chief Constable is “making every penny count”?

This is business as usual and is primarily conducted through the work of Resource Control Board and Capital Strategy Group. This gives early sight of any adverse variances together with action taken to address them and any implications of these. Other boards will provide detailed monitoring of projects and their outcomes such as PRISM or the Innovation Board, and the Strategic Performance Board will provide oversight to ensure that desired outputs of activity are effected.

Item 9 – Rural Crime

- Cllr Fry – “Why is there such a backlog of grants and renewals for shotguns and firearms licences”.

By way of brief background, it might be helpful to reiterate that Firearms Licensing is governed by the Firearms Act 1968 and its amendments, coupled with the Home Office Guide on Firearms Licensing Law – which was updated at the end of 2021, as the result of an HMIC report in 2015 and the desire for more consistency in the application of firearms licensing policy and procedures between different Forces.

Force firearms licensing functions are also subject to Dorset Police internal governance, the HMICFRS inspection regime, and to oversight by my Office. Indeed, members will remember my last update on this matter – last September – where I talked through the three reviews of the firearms licensing function currently underway, which does limit me in terms of what I can say at present. These are the IOPC investigation in the Keyham shooting, internal investigation led by ACCs from each Force, and external peer review.

Every firearm application will now require a medical declaration by the applicant. This will need to be verified by either the applicant’s GP, or by another medical practitioner reviewing the applicant’s notes. There are also a series of additional background checks that are available, but these are only recommended where there are clear concerns that an applicant could pose a threat to public safety if they possess a firearm.

It is well understood that there is a backlog – and interim steps have been taken to address this, including placing additional personnel within the team. The reasons for the backlog are yet to be fully reported on, and I will commit to talking through those once the various reviews have completed and the results can be made public.

- The PCC states that he will introduce Special Constables with expertise in Rural Crime - how does he intend to do this and what incentives will he introduce in order to maintain this cohort?

In response to this pledge within the Police and Crime Plan, the Force has already begun planning future intakes of Special Constables so that some Special Constables are allocated rural duties in the future. Those Special Constables will benefit from the required training to build up their expertise.

As Special Constable intakes are planned quite some time in advance and the training programme is, naturally, lengthy, it will take some time for this pledge to be delivered and for a cohort to have been recruited and established.

The selection processes, learning and development and retention policies are all operational matters for the Chief Constable, but of course, I will keep the Panel up to date as this initiative develops in the years to come.