

WILTSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

MINUTES OF THE WILTSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL MEETING HELD ON 15 JANUARY 2015 AT COMMITTEE ROOM VI, CIVIC OFFICE, EUCLID ST, SWINDON SN1 2JH.

Present:

Cllr Abdul Amin, Cllr Andrew Bennett, Cllr Richard Britton (Chairman), Cllr Trevor Carbin, Cindy Creasy, Cllr Oliver Donachie, Chris Henwood, Cllr Charles Howard, Cllr Peter Hutton and Cllr Tony Trotman (Substitute)

Also Present:

Angus Macpherson – Police & Crime Commissioner
Clive Barker – OPPC
Paul Deal – OPCC
Sarah Kyte – OPCC
Emily Higson – Wiltshire Council
Henry Powell – Wiltshire Council
Roger Bishton – Wiltshire Council

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from:-

Cllr Glenis Ansell – Wiltshire Council
Cllr Chris Caswill – Wiltshire Council
Cllr Julian Johnson - Wiltshire Council, who was substituted by Cllr Tony Trotman
Kieran Kilgallen – Chief Executive, OPCC

2 Minutes and matters arising

Resolved:

To confirm and sign as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 November 2014.

3 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

4 Chairman's Announcements

There were no Chairman's announcements

5 Public Participation

There were no members of the public present or councillors' questions.

6 PCC Diary report

The PCC Diary report which set out a summary of commitments the Commissioner had undertaken since the last meeting of the Police and Crime Panel on 19 November 2014 was received.

The Commissioner advised that:-

- He had attended a regional meeting in Bridgwater on 12 November 2014 when updates had been received on the work of the regional programme boards, including the Regional Organised Crime Unit, Major Crime, Digital Evidence Management and Regional ICT Strategy. He also gave an update on the Community Rehabilitation Company contract which would cover the South West of England and Wales and come into effect on 1 February. He explained that the primary purpose of this contract was to assist ex offenders in finding work.
- The Community Messaging Launch had been continuing with a launch in Melksham on 13 November and in Tidworth on 14 November. It was anticipated that this exercise would be completed throughout Wiltshire by the second week in February. One of the objects of this Launch would be to re-energise Neighbourhood Watch schemes. The Commissioner stressed that there would be a focus on Community Safety. Reference was made to Neighbourhood Alert and Members were reminded that this was an online, secure community messaging system that allowed authorised administrators to log in and send messages to registered people in the community, members of Neighbourhood Watch and other schemes such as Tenant and Resident Associations, Church Groups, Community contacts and members of Business Watch, who had chosen to receive them. Messages could be sent by email, telephone or text message by a range of approved Information by providers such as the Police, Neighbourhood Watch administrators, Trading Standards and the Fire Service. Concern had been expressed that parish notices such as fete publicity and other social events could easily swamp the site and it was acknowledged that this potential danger would need to be watched.

- A meeting of the Wiltshire Criminal Justice Board (WCJB) had taken place on 26 November, the Board not having met for some time. It was now chaired by the Chief Constable and the Commissioner had been invited to become a member. Mr Robert Buckland, MP for Swindon South and a member of the National Criminal Justice Board, had been invited to join. The work of the WCJB was still being developed but its members were committed to its success.
- A telephone conference had taken place on 27 November with the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners in respect of the planned police ICT company, discussing in particular its benefits to Wiltshire. It should bring significant purchasing benefits to its members by designing contracts which would attract substantial savings and lead to the standardisation of equipment.
- An open meeting of the National Farmers' Union (NFU) had been held on 4 December at which the Commissioner had presented the initial results of the rural crime survey. The survey was a major consultation with farmers, land owners and others who either live or work in rural Wiltshire. Members of the Panel questioned why, from the list of rural crimes, there was no mention of arson. The Commissioner suggested that the reason might well be seasonal.
- The use of mobile police camera vans was being examined by officers and councillors to help combat speeding offences. The Commissioner reminded the Panel that although the fixed cameras in Wiltshire were not operational, the equipment had been left in place which in itself could well act as a deterrent. It was reported that there had been a decrease in accidents in the Swindon area since the deactivation of fixed speed cameras and on balance the Panel considered that mobile police camera vans provided a better deterrent than fixed cameras.
- The Commissioner had attended a performance of 'This Secret Life' at Churchfield Academy in Swindon on 8 December. This play, which had been performed across Swindon and Wiltshire, was performed by Sixth Sense theatre group and was a very powerful play about domestic abuse and control of a perpetrator over a young female student in her first relationship. The performance was followed by a very useful debate about the issues raised in the play. The Commissioner reported that there had been an increase in violence in the last twelve months and stressed the importance of creating a suitable atmosphere where a victim felt comfortable to report domestic violence. It was noted that there was still plenty to do to foster better education on this subject throughout the schools.
- On 11 December, the Home Secretary announced her proposed reforms to allow directly-elected PCCs to take charge of complaints against their police force. The Commissioner stated that, as elected Commissioner, he

welcomed this announcement as it was important that the public had trust in the police complaints system. Members of the Panel stressed the importance of the public knowing the outcomes following use of the complaints procedure. The Commissioner stated that the Wiltshire complaints procedure was being well used and he planned to invest funds into educating young people who were excellent at challenging procedures.

- The Neighbourhood Policing Unit would be relocating to the Civic Offices at Euclid, Street, Swindon the following week and would be opening towards the end of the month. It was reported that the former police station at Chippenham had been attracting a certain amount of anti-social behaviour but two bids had so far been received for the purchase of this site; the closing date for receipt of bids was 31 March 2015 after which a decision would have to be made on its future.

Resolved:

To note the Police & Crime Commissioner's report.

7 Budget Options and Medium Term Financial Strategy

The Commissioner gave a detailed presentation on his draft budget settlement.

He explained that in October 2014 the initial Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), attached as an appendix to the report, had been produced and reviewed at the Commissioner's monitoring board. The MTFS looked at the estimated financial position of the PCC over the following three years and the impact to commission services. The Commissioner stressed that the assumptions included were superceded by actual information as it was received.

It was noted that the following Police relevant information was announced in the December settlement;

- a **5.1% cash reduction** in Police Revenue funding for 2015-16
- Additional top slicing of PCC Funding in 2015-16 of £96m (for the Innovation Fund, IPCC, HMIC, Major Programmes, contingency and other areas). Resulting in a funding reduction of £835,000 for Wiltshire PCC.
- the provision of additional council tax freeze grants for 2015-16 equivalent to a 1% tax rise for those precepting bodies which decide not to increase council tax.

- the announcement that any council tax freeze grants will be funded from the original police settlement hence reducing 'normal funding' available for distribution to PCC's in the future.
- the setting of the council tax referendum threshold level at 2%.

This resulted in the main grants received from central government reducing from £61.652m to £58.502m, a reduction of £3.150m.

The Commissioner went on to explain that he was currently considering two options surrounding the council tax, namely:

- Option A – To increase council tax by 1.9% (in the knowledge that this would be the maximum allowable before a referendum was called)
- Option B – To maintain council tax at the 2014-15 level

The Panel noted the estimated funds likely to be available to the Commissioner under each option but he pointed out that additional funds would be allocated centrally to commission victims' services and support restorative justice. Provisional funding announced for victims' services in 2015-16 was £584,000; part of this funding would now finance Wiltshire's direct contribution to the Victims' Support Charity. Provisional funding for restorative justice was £155,000 for 2015-16.

The Commissioner explained that in considering the options, he needed to focus on the long term funding position. To not increase council tax at this time would have considerable impact on his future ability to commission policing and crime services. The offer of freeze grants would reduce his future base budget and only further deplete funding available nationally for policing. He pointed out that a 1.9% increase in council tax would result in Wiltshire's Band D council tax increasing from £160.92 to £163.98, representing an increase of £3.06 per annum or 6p per week. An average increase of £3.06 per year, per household would provide the Commissioner with an additional £345,000 of local income for 2015-16. Whilst much would depend upon the outcome of the forthcoming general election, Commissioners had been advised to plan on further central reductions of 3.2% per annum.

It was noted that the Commissioner was in the process of widely consulting the public through town and parish councils, area boards and locality meetings, chambers of commerce and the farming community, the public consultation running from Tuesday 6 January to Wednesday 4 February 2015.

In answer to a question as to where savings were likely to be achieved, Clive Barker, Chief Finance Officer explained that it was hoped that some savings could be achieved through a reduction in back office staff. It was noted that savings had also been achieved by a reduction of 500 officers and also from the fleet and estate.

The Panel was informed that reported crime had been decreasing although there had been an increase in domestic violence. Furthermore, there appeared to be an increase in IT crime but a certain amount of this was not being reported. The Commissioner stressed the importance of maintaining neighbourhood policing, a reduction of which could lead to serious problems in his ability to provide for effective policing.

The Commissioner also considered that savings could be achieved by further collaboration with neighbouring forces in the South West in order to identify services and functions, such as technical services, which could be shared.

It was noted that the Chief Constable's Financial Plan included the appointments of a Special Co-ordinator and a Volunteers Co-ordinator, which were required to engage the public in helping to keep Wiltshire and Swindon safe. Clive Barker confirmed that both posts had been filled.

The Chairman referred to the restructuring of the Force at the beginning of the current financial year and the identified need for additional Inspectors on a temporary measure. Clive Barker confirmed that the number of these officers would shortly be reduced in order to achieve the necessary savings.

The Chairman also referred to the review of local policing being carried out by the Chief Constable and the need to save £800,000 from the establishment. The Commissioner stated that these savings could potentially be made from any section of the Force but recently the superintendents had been requested to identify potential savings from the middle ranks.

The Chief Constable's MTFS had identified a strategy to close the funding gaps over the following two years if a 1.9% council tax increase was agreed. However, the Panel appreciated that there were risks that these savings might not be achieved, the biggest risk being potential partnership failure as working with councils and other police forces was expected to deliver large savings.

Resolved:

To note the Commissioner's report.

8 Task Group update

The Panel received an update on the activity of the following Task Groups:-

- Volunteers and Special Constables Task Group
- Licensing Task Group
- Police Performance Review Working Group
- Regional Collaboration Task Group

Resolved:

- 1. To note the update on task group activity provided.**
- 2. To note that the Panel Chairman has submitted a series of questions to the PCC asking for updates on issues raised in his response to the Final Report of the Volunteers and Special Constables Task Group.**
- 3. To note the Final Report of the Licensing Task Group and that this has been submitted to the PCC and a response is awaited.**
- 4. To endorse the terms of reference proposed for the Police Performance Review Working Group.**
- 5. To defer endorsing the terms of reference proposed for the Regional Collaborations Task Group in order that the views of the PCC be obtained, a summary list of the various collaborations in which Wiltshire Police was involved still being awaited from OPCC.**

9 Forward Work Plan

A document was received showing the Panel's Forward Work Programme.

Resolved:

To note the contents of the Forward Work Programme for this Panel.

10 Future meeting dates

Resolved:

To note that the next meeting of the Panel was due to be held on Tuesday 5 February 2015, in the Kennet Room at County Hall, Trowbridge, starting at 10.30am.

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 1.30 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Roger Bishton, of Democratic Services, direct line 01225 713035, e-mail roger.bishton@wiltshire.gov.uk

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