

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
AVON AND SOMERSET POLICE AND CRIME PANEL
HELD ON 6TH FEBRUARY 2013
AT 10.30 AM**

Present

North Somerset Council

Councillor Nigel Ashton (Chairman), Councillor Roz Willis

Somerset County Council

Councillor William Wallace

West Somerset District Council

Councillor Stuart Dowding

Mendip District Council

Councillor John Parham

Bristol City Council

Councillor Pete Levy, Councillor Jeff Lovell,

Councillor Doug Naysmith

Taunton Deane District Council

Councillor Mark Edwards

Sedgemoor District Council

Councillor John Swayne

South Somerset District Council

Councillor Tony Lock

Bath and North East Somerset Council

Councillor Lisa Brett, Councillor Francine Haeberling

South Gloucestershire Council

Councillor Mike Drew

Independent Members

Rosa Hui

Roger Kinsman

Brenda Steel

Officers Present:

Ian Pagan – Lead Officer Bristol CC

Jude Williams – Scrutiny Officer, Bristol CC

Patricia Jones – Clerk to the Panel, Bristol CC

Sue Mountstevens – Police and Crime Commissioner

John Smith – Chief Executive OPCC

Mark Simmonds – Treasurer OPCC

Joanna Coulon – Head of Criminal Justice, Youth and Health Partnerships OPCC

**PCP
37.2/13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors Wallace, Lock, Parham and Edwards placed on record their interest in relation the outsourcing partnership Southwest One.

**PCP
38.2/13 MINUTES – AVON AND SOMERSET POLICE AND CRIME
PANEL CONFIRMATION HEARING – 6TH JANUARY 2013.**

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel Confirmation Hearing held on 6th January 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**PCP
39.2/13 MINUTES – AVON AND SOMERSET POLICE AND CRIME
PANEL – 6TH JANUARY 2013.**

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting of the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel held on the rise of the Confirmation Hearing on 6th January 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**PCP
40.2/13 PUBLIC FORUM**

The Panel heard from David Redgewell. Mr. Redgewell stated it was important that provision was made in the budget to maintain high quality policing in Bristol Bath and Yeovil, and to ensure safety and the continuing success of the night time economies in these areas. He drew attention to the vital role carried out by PCSOs across the force and urged the Panel to work with the commissioner in tackling the force-wide issues of hate crime and anti-social behaviour.

COMMISSIONER'S UPDATE

A briefing note was circulated in advance of the meeting. The Commissioner updated the Panel on the following key areas, set out in detail in the briefing note:-

- The development of the Police and Crime Plan. A copy of the template Bristol plan was circulated to give the Panel a sense of the purpose and content of the District Plans. A copy of the main Draft Plan was also circulated. This would be circulated to key stakeholders and published on the website for feedback.
- Public consultation – in addition to the venues listed, an additional event would take place at Waitrose Nailsea 4.30pm to 6.30pm on
- The Community Safety Grant Allocation Process – subject to confirmation of the
- Volunteer Complaints Panel – the closing date for applications is the 20th March and volunteers will receive training and expenses for travel.
- Engagement with Young People – the Commissioner had met with representatives of Force Forward, a national campaign run during the campaign period to raise the profile of the role and young people. Focus groups and Round Table events would take place in February and March aimed at young BME people.
- Probation Service – the response to consultation was being developed along with the Probation Trust and criminal justice colleagues. A regional meeting of Commissioners would take place on the 8th February in a joint effort to raise concerns. A copy of the response would be shared with the Panel after the consultation deadline on the 22nd February 2013.
- Association of Police Commissioners – the commissioner had attended an introductory event in London.
- Nick Gargan would take up his position as Chief Constable on the 4th March 2013.
- PCSOs – a cross party working group had explored alternative approaches to funding in Bristol. The proposal was to maintain

numbers at 110 with Bristol CC funding 20 posts and the Commissioner 10.

- Bristol Crime Forum – events 11th February and 13th March as detailed in the briefing note.
- In the Media – the independent scrutiny of the Police was vital and the IPCC was under-funded. It was hoped that the Volunteer Complaints Panel would insist with the scrutiny function and demonstrate that the complaints process was not open and transparent.
- Out and About Days – programme as listed in the briefing note.

RESOLVED - (1) that the report be noted.

(2) that the response to consultation on the privatisation of the Probation Service be circulated to the Panel after the consultation deadline on 22nd February 2013.

PCP

42.2/13

COST OF THE COMMISSIONER'S ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

The Panel received a verbal report (agenda item 6) relating to the associated costs of the Commissioner's administrative office

Below is a summary of the key points made and the ensuing discussion:-

- The Commissioner would manage her office with a budget of £1.45m, a small increase in the budget inherited from the transition arrangements put in place by the former Police Authority (£1.42m).
- £180k in savings from members costs had been invested to support the Commissioner, staff and resources to address the increased workload.
- The Communications external spend had increased by £30K.
- The appointment of additional staff in the form of a Deputy Commissioner and/or Commissioning Manager would be reviewed after March 2013.
- The Commissioner stated the office was under-resourced but she was very conscious of tax payer's money. She did not

envisage that the current level of consultation and engagement would continue.

- The number of contacts had increased to 1500 in the last 6 weeks and the media profile of the office was described as notably different from the former Police Authority. Additional responsibilities around community safety funding, commissioning and criminal justice had significantly increased workload. The position would be reviewed after the Budget and Police and Crime Plan processes.
- The annual budget for the Panel was £53K.

RESOLVED - that the report be noted.

PCP

43.2/13

FORMAL SCRUTINY OF THE BUDGET AND PRECEPT

The Panel received a report from the Chief Finance Officer in the OPC (agenda item no. 7) providing notification of the proposed precept level and supporting budget for consideration.

The Commissioner responded as follows to Panel questions:-

- How will the projected deficits of £9,842 (2014/15) £23,421(2015/16) and £35,561 (2016/17) be met ?

A balanced budget had been produced for next year and the Commissioner was working closely with LAs and the constabulary to address future years. There were no definitive answers at this stage.

- What is the impact of not having made the anticipated savings from the Southwest One contract ?

Across the ten-year life of the Southwest One contract revenue and capital savings of £15m were assured. The overall level of savings would exceed targets.

- With further savings planned for delivery in 2014/15, including £4.4m of reductions to frontline capability, what does this mean for officers on the beat in terms of numbers ?

There will be no impact in 2013/14. 2014/15 will be the first time Districts would be asked to contribute to savings. Impact on front line capability could not ruled out. It was clarified that 'District' refers to police Basic Command Units and not councils.

- If front line service cuts were a possibility, why freeze the Precept, why not build the base in small increments to protect the future ?

The Commissioner wished to avoid going to the tax payer for more money until she was satisfied that there were no more efficiencies to be made. All aspects of expenditure would be looked at with the Chief Constable to identify all possible savings options. It was acknowledged that the freeze was not a long term solution and increases were likely in the future.

- The former Police Authority had been adept in planning for projected deficits in advance. When would the Commissioner know how the increasing deficits would be addressed ?

A series of reviews were set up in 2010 to consider the response to the CSR and developed into firm projects. A similar process would be undertaken now. The intention was not to slice, but look at better ways to deliver the service. It was anticipated that this would involve a whole scale review of the delivery of processes. The former Police Authority had not planned for the new CSR period and the existing budget position had essentially been inherited. A prudent approach had been adopted to counter a worst case deficit position in 2014/15.

- If Southwest One was not performing well across the board, this should be addressed. However if savings were anticipated, can they be used to counter any cuts to front line capability ?

The tracking system for procurement savings would be provided to the Panel. This showed that Southwest One was above target and procurement was generally stacking up well across the Force area.

- As part of her public consultation, had the Commissioner gained any indication of what people thought of her proposal to freeze the Precept ?

Anecdotally, the Commissioner understood that people were grateful that the Precept would not be increased.

- Was it fair to say that a freeze would weaken the argument to have the damping formula reviewed ?

This would not weaken the resolve to have the damping situation addressed and strong lobbying would continue. It was likely that the issue had been set aside to coincide with the new CSR.

- By freezing that precept, and qualifying for a Government grant equivalent to a 1% rise, was this not storing up problems for the future – effectively “shifting it” ?

The Commissioner had time to set a precept Strategy for 2014/15 and beyond. The decision and freeze was for 2013/14 only and the budget is balanced for that year.

- The OPCC was the only area where spend was being increased, how could this be justified ?

The Commissioner stated that her remit was wider than the previous Police Authority, but the advantage to this was that she could consider a much wider umbrella of services. By facilitating the ability of people to work together, particularly in the criminal justice area, the Commissioner could effect and influence many savings.

- The public want to see officers walking the streets and systems in place to address anti-social behaviour and its related causes. Community safety funding was decreasing and LAs were not in a position to bridge the gap. How does the Commissioner reconcile the element of the weighted formula based on population ?

The desire for visible policing was understood and work was in progress to increase the number of special officers from 500 to 700. There was no formula to satisfy all and the aim was to be as objective as possible with the fixed pot of money available. This was not set in stone for the future.

- It was difficult to understand the methodology behind a funding formula that effectively rewards areas that are successful in combating crime. Was it not more important to give weighting to areas of deprivation ? How had the Commissioner arrived at the formula ?

By using published data on recorded crime, the ONS census and DCLG indices of deprivation. The Commissioner was keen to avoid double counting and had weighted population up accordingly. A formula based on deprivation alone would imply a preconceived

bias towards Bristol. A balanced approach had been taken by focussing primarily on population but still taking crime levels into account. It made sense to look at projects that can be centrally commissioned and the Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) were best placed to advise.

- The CSPs were keen for funding to be distributed equitably across the force area. Would this be the case ?

This year the Commissioner had inherited a series of existing funds including Positive Futures. Attention was drawn to the summary allocations listed at paragraph 45 of the report. The Commissioner assured the Panel that funding would be distributed equitably and fairly.

In conclusion, there was brief discussion concerning the sparsity factor in areas of Somerset, and the Commissioner was urged to take account of this when making decisions in the future. The point was also made that Bristol experienced higher levels of crime. The need to establish which aspects of the service had the greatest impact on crime levels was emphasised.

The Commissioner withdrew from the room whilst the Panel considered its decision in relation to the proposed Precept level and supporting budget. Following detailed discussion, it was noted that the majority of members were not in favour with the Commissioner's decision to freeze the precept for a further year. The recommendation to accept the proposed Precept was put to the vote, 5 members voting in favour, 11 against and 1 abstention.

The Panel was advised that in order to exercise its power to veto the Precept, a two thirds majority of the full Panel membership was required and this had not been achieved. The Commissioner was advised that whilst the threshold to veto the budget had not been reached, the result of the vote was a clear indication of the concerns held by members. The Chairman explained that given the inevitability of further cuts, the majority view was that even a small increase in the tax base now, would make more options available in the future and offset the need for bigger rises in subsequent years. A small increase in the Precept in the region of 1% was considered acceptable on the basis that this translated to an amount of £0.03p to the average household. For the reasons outlined above, the Commissioner was requested to reconsider her decision to freeze the Precept.

The Commissioner stated that she would take all comments into consideration, but had committed to this decision as part of her campaign based on the government incentive of a grant equivalent to a 1% council tax increase.

RESOLVED – (1) that the report be noted.

(2) that the majority decision of the Panel not to accept the Commissioner’s proposal to freeze the Precept for a further year be noted (5 members voting in favour, 11 against and 1 abstention).

(3) that it be noted that a two thirds majority of the full Panel membership had not been achieved thus preventing the Panel from exercising its power to veto the Precept.

PCP

44.2/13

COMMUNICATIONS PROTOCOL

The Panel received a report from the Lead Officer for the Police and Crime Panel, Bristol City Council (agenda item no. 8) relating to the communications protocol.

RESOLVED – that the proposed Communications Protocol appended to the report be approved.

PCP

45.2/13

COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

The Panel considered a standing complaints report from the OPCC providing the Panel with oversight of all complaints made against the Commissioner to date (agenda item no. 9).

RESOLVED - that the report be noted.

**PCP
46.2/13**

WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel noted the Work Programme which now included a training session that would take place in May/June agreed at the last meeting. Members were invited to contact Jude Williams with any specific training requirements for the session and the Scrutiny Officer would confirm the date in due course.

RESOLVED - (1) that the Work Programme be noted.

(2) that Members contact Jude Williams with any specific training requirements for the training session.

(3) that the Scrutiny Officer confirm the training date in due course.

**PCP
47.2/13**

ISSUES RAISED BY PANEL MEMBERS

It was noted that Joanna Coulon was the staff link officer in the OPCC as confirmed in a letter circulated to the Panel on 21st December 2012.

It was agreed that detailed training on the Budget would assist the Panel and make the scrutiny process more meaningful. It was noted that the Chief Finance Office may be in a position to arrange this. The possibility of an induction tour at Police Headquarters would also be discussed with colleagues in the Constabulary.

Rosa Hui suggested the accessibility issues relating to the Commissioner's website should be looked at again. This was agreed.

It was confirmed that the OPCC was working with the Constabulary to formulate a response to the draft Anti-Social Behaviour Bill. As agreed and recorded at the last meeting, this would be circulated to the Panel when available, potentially by the end of March 2013.

RESOLVED - (1) that the possibility of detailed budget training and an induction tour of Police Headquarters be looked into.

(2) that the accessibility concerns raised in relation to the OPCC website be looked at.

(3) that the Commissioner's response to the draft Anti-Social Behaviour Bill be provided to the Panel when available.

PCP

48.2/13

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 15th March 2013 at 10.30am at North Somerset Council's Castlewood Offices, Clevedon.

(The meeting ended at 1.05pm)

CHAIRMAN

Members of the Panel took part in a dip-sampling session of current complaint files after the meeting. One of the files was subsequently escalated to the Panel for resolution at the request of the complainant.