



Agenda Item No:4

Bristol City Council

Minutes of the Police and Crime Panel

Wednesday 10th December 2014 at 11.00am

Avon and Somerset Police Headquarters

Councillor Members Present:-

Nigel Ashton (Chairman), Lisa Brett, Richard Brown, Stuart Dowding, Francine Haerberling, Gary Hopkins, Tony Lock, Jeff Lovell, John Parham, Jane Warmington.

Independent Members:-

Rosa Hui, Roger Kinsman, Andrew Sharman.

Officers in attendance:-

Patricia Jones.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor John Swayne, Councillor Mike Drew and Councillor Heather Goddard.

2. Public Forum

The Panel noted the statement submitted by David Redgewell submitted and circulated in advance of the meeting. The Panel invited the Commissioner to provide a direct response.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on the 30th October 2014

Resolved – that the Minutes of the last meeting on the 21st March 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendment:-

Page 11 – “Barnardo’s Innovation Fund” to be replaced by “Home Office Innovation Fund”.

4. Commissioner’s Update

The Panel requested earlier sight of this standing report going forward. It was agreed that it would be despatched with the agenda papers in future and any further updates provided at the Panel meeting.

The Commissioner drew attention to the following from her report:-

- Transforming Rehabilitation – oversight of the programme would be carried out by the Regional Reducing Reoffenders Board at a local level. Working Links, the Preferred Bidder for the newly established Community Rehabilitation Companies would attend the regional Commissioner’s meeting on the 21st January.
- Mental Health Concordat – the Commissioner was due to sign off each of the five Declarations and Action Plans on the 17th of December.
- Bijan Ebrahimi – it was noted that disciplinary proceedings would be taken against 13 Police officers and staff. These proceedings would be delayed until the criminal proceedings were disposed of – a preliminary court hearing was scheduled for the 15th January. In the interim, it was noted that considerable work was being undertaken to ensure consistent officer response/delivery across the force

area. This included reliable and standardised recording of crime as it happens.

- Operation Brook – significant resources had been allocated to on-going work with the Somali community. Recent threats of demonstrations had been dissipated.

Below is a summary of the key issues/questions raised by Panel Members:-

- With reference to the conduct of Police officers, the point was made that officers need to feel empowered to make decisions and to know that they will be supported in doing so. It was also suggested that the discipline process affects how the public regards the force and diminishes confidence in the ability of officers to do their job.

The Commissioner stated that it was arguable that the process provided a level of assurance that serious matters involving the conduct of Police officers would be investigated. She added that public confidence in policing continued to rise locally, placing Avon and Somerset in 10th place nationally, a rise from 35th place 4 years ago.

- It was suggested that there was no best practice model on how to reach and integrate isolated and marginalised communities. The Commissioner stated that she was happy to share the one team approach that was being rolled out in areas of deprivation. This involved bringing all agencies around the table and as a result, crime and ASB were decreasing.
- Reference was made to the Building a Bridge project and the good practice emerging from this multi-agency collaboration which had significantly improved BCC's engagement with minority communities.

- It was confirmed that the Police officers charged with criminal offences in relation to the Bijan Ebrahimi case had been suspended pending the outcome of their cases. The remaining officers had not been suspended but were not engaged in public facing duties at the present time.
- It was suggested that there was evidence of a cultural shift in the attitude of some officers in their dealings with the public. There was general agreement that year on year austerity cuts and increasing work pressures were putting additional strain on officers. The Commissioner confirmed that the appropriate support was available to officers if needed. She added that the Acting Chief Constable was alert to the impact of the change programme and recognised the importance of strong leadership.
- As part of Operation Tonic, the drink-drive campaign, anyone charged with drink-driving will have their name published online and sent to the media.
- The Domestic Abuse Scrutiny Event had proved an effective piece of work and the same approach would be adopted for an ASB event in future.
- The Commissioner stated that she was extremely disappointed that the recent HMIC report showed that one third of reported crimes in Avon and Somerset went unrecorded. Remedial steps were taken in response to the report and the Constabulary would report back on progress in key areas in 3 months time. This could be shared with the Panel.

In addition a full time Incident Registrar had been appointed to develop a more rounded approach to crime recording. The Commissioner added that she was confident that target setting was not the cause of the problem. Recording was now in the region of 80%-85% and work would continue to improve on this.

The attention of the Panel was drawn to the England and Wales Crime Survey which provided valuable information about the extent and nature of crime in the country, including crimes that may not reported to the Police.

- It was recognised that maintaining the co-operation of the victim was key to the successful prosecution of domestic violence and serious sexual assault cases. The Constabulary was experimenting with body cameras as a means of securing a conviction when victims felt unable to proceed with a complaint.
- The Commissioner responded to concerns about the closure of Trinity Road Police Station and the effect on the public and morale of Police officers and PCSOs. The effect of the transition and its impact on the day to day lives of staff was accepted. However lack of resources were fundamental to the changes being implemented, and an appropriate Police presence would still be maintained in the Trinity Road area. It was emphasised that the Police were now more available to the public when they were needed most, between 5pm and 10pm.
- It was confirmed that UK Border Agency had made the decision to move the central sign-in point for asylum seekers from Trinity Road to Patchway Police Station. There was an an open offer for the operation to remain at Trinity Road or the Bridewell given its city centre location.
- There was discussion around the issues and risks associated with under-age sexual activity and the role of the Police in enforcing the age of consent.

The Commissioner stated that she had made representations to the Home Secretary about bringing back Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) in schools – children were vulnerable and needed to know the basics of

a normal healthy relationship. It was acknowledged that children were currently exposed to a different level of sexualisation and imagery than in the past. It was emphasised that situations indicative of a wider child protection concern were always taken seriously by the Police.

- The Panel discussed the merits of whole place budgets and how services can successfully be integrated to tackle issues such as domestic violence. It was recognised that regional collaboration was key in the light of the ongoing deficit and noted that significant work was underway with LAs regarding the integration of services. The point was made that ring-fencing around a particular crime type was not possible given the Force was required to respond as called upon.

Resolved:-

- (1) Commissioner's Update Report to be despatched with the agenda papers in future and any further updates provided at the Panel meeting.**
- (2) The Commissioner to update the Panel on the work being undertaken to reach/integrate isolated and marginalised communities.**
- (3) Recording of crime – update on improvements/key areas to be provided to the March meeting.**

5. Police and Crime Needs Assessment – Police and Crime Plan refresh

The Panel considered a report detailing the key findings, risks and opportunities emerging from the Police and Crime Needs Assessment for 2014. The Commissioner acknowledged the significant pressure on officers and specifically highlighted the areas of FGM, Domestic Violence and slavery. She also

thanked her team for the work undertaken in relation to the PCNA.

Andrew Sharman referred to the genuine partnership building taking place in the area of business crime. It was reported that partners looked forward to continuing success in the future.

Resolved – that the report be noted.

6. Draft Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme

The Chief Financial Officer introduced the report and summarised the current position of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Capital Programme.

It was reported that confirmation of the final Grant Settlement was expected in the near future, but available for consideration at this point were the key funding and expenditure assumptions set out in Annex B. It was noted that the proposed precept increase of 1.99% was subject to the referendum threshold imposed by the Home Office (2% in 14/15).

It was explained that the Chancellor's Statement and indications of continuing austerity measures had impacted negatively on the key assumptions. The position looked bleak going forward with a deficit and planned savings totalling £40 million at least. A Precept increase of 1.99% was planned for every year and allowances made for a 1% increase in the base.

The Commissioner added that if successful at next year's General Election, Labour would not reduce funding in 2015/16. However cuts could be anticipated thereafter and plans included mandating Constabularies to merge.

Assurances were given that next year's Budget was balanced and confirmation of the main grant would not affect this. Reserves could be drawn on if necessary but the deficit over the next 4 years was likely to worsen. Based on this type of austerity, ACPO predicted that 1 in 4 officers were at risk.

Work on the Operating Model would be revisited and collaboration work with other Forces would continue. Unlike recent reports elsewhere, the Force would continue to operate whilst being clear about what it was no longer possible to deliver. The point was made that integrated services projects needed to be a joint piece of work and Panel members were urged where possible to promote these initiatives with their respective LAs.

There was general agreement that the redesign of public services across the board was the underlying driver going forward and transparency was key in terms of the challenges faced. There was a limit to the extent to which the non-pay budget could be squeezed and the majority of the deficit would need to be met by people in the organisation.

The capital programme was substantial and aimed to create an environment where savings would be made - Estates, Fleet, ICT and equipment. The infrastructure needed to be right so that the increasing demands on officers could be met.

It was agreed that the key assumptions contained in the report would be updated and re-circulated to the Panel. The Commissioner would also brief local MPs.

The Commissioner was urged to look at a range of options for the future and it was confirmed that all options were being explored.

There was general support amongst members for a 1.99% increase in the precept, based on what was currently known about funding.

Resolved – that the key assumptions in the report be updated and re-circulated to the Panel.

7. OPCC Budget Report - Outturn and Draft Budget for 2015/16

The Panel considered a report setting out the outturn position for the OPCC in 2014/15 and the proposed budget for 2015/16.

Benchmarked against the budgets of other PCCs, it was noted that the Commissioner's budget was in the bottom quartile in terms of spend.

8. Exclusion of the Press and Public

Recommended - that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of the following item, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended).

9. Panel Briefing

(Exempt Paragraph 7 - information relating to an action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime)

The Panel received a briefing from the Commissioner.

10. Minutes

(Exempt paragraph 1 and 2 – information relating to any individual and information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual)

Resolved – that the Minutes of the meetings held on the 7th August, 10th September and 30th October 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The meeting moved back into open session.

11. Panel Budget Report 2014/15

The Panel noted the Home Office grant settlement with the host authority for funding of Panel costs and expenses, and the budget outturn for the first half year of operation in 2014/15.

Resolved – that the report be noted.

12. Work Programme

The Panel noted the updated Work Programme, and the additional item added to the 11th March meeting - Complaint Review and Emerging Recommendations/Systems.

Resolved – that the report be noted.

13. Standing Complaints Report

The Panel considered and noted a report of the Chief Executive OPCC providing an oversight of all complaints made against the Commissioner.

It was noted that the reference to 3 complaints in the report was incorrect and that no complaints had been received since the last meeting. An amended report was circulated.

Resolved – that the report be noted.

14. Panel Link Member Reports

It was agreed that the champion areas allocated to Panel Members would be reviewed. It was agreed that current link members would be asked to confirm the current position in relation to their respective work areas.