

Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Panel

Friday 27 January 2023

PRESENT:

Councillor Croad, in the Chair.

Councillor Towill, Vice Chair.

Councillors Alvey, Atiya-Alla, Dewhirst, Hackett, Knowles, Loudoun, Reilly (substitute for Councillor Penberthy), Salmon (substitute for Councillor Pengelly), Samuel, Tilbey, and Wright.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Biederman, Chopak, Hopwood, Penberthy and Pengelly.

Absent: Sharon Minty and Councillors Fitter and Rodger.

Also in attendance: Alison Hernandez (Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Commissioner), Frances Hughes (Chief Executive for OPCC), Nicola Allen (Treasurer) Felicity Ridgway (Director of Operations for OPCC), Pierre-Michel Doutreligne (Strategy, Planning and Meetings Officer for OPCC), Ross Jago (Head of Governance, Performance and Risk) and Jake Metcalfe (Democratic Advisor).

The meeting started at 10.30 am and finished at 1.00 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the Panel will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

112. **Minutes**

The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record subject to the following amendments:

- 106 (f) The Commissioner requested a reduction to 10 seconds rather than a 10 second reduction
- 106 (f) should read P1 rather than P2
- 106 (a) correction to spelling errors from Temporary Chief Constable Jim Colwille to Colwell.

113. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

114. **Public Questions**

There were no public questions.

115. **Proposed Precept, Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2023/24 - 2026/27**

Alison Hernandez, Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Commissioner introduced this item and provided context for the proposed precept highlighting the following key points:

- a) The proposal had been below inflation tax rise and the force, as with many services had been struggling with inflation which would continue throughout the year. Work would continue to ensure that the budget would be sustainable in the future and the organisation would be working to be more efficient and smarter;
- b) The Commissioner acknowledged the national events in policing that occurred in the previous year around police officers committing crimes nationally and had included Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. The Commissioner reiterated her zero tolerance stance on those officers and requested help from the majority of the decent, hardworking and high integrity police officers and staff to uncover and expose those officers/staff that should not be present in the organisation;
- c) The Commissioners Annual budget survey to constituents highlighted that confidence in policing for Devon and Cornwall Police force had increased. The Commissioner acknowledged that the survey had been conducted prior to national revelations and advised that she was unsure constituents would have the same level of confidence;
- d) The plan had been to build trust and resilience to ensure the region would be safer and that the foundation of creating a force where people were motivated and better connected to constituents. During times of economic hardship there had been a corresponding increase in crime, the Commissioner made her case for what she believed was required to ensure communities could be safer today and into the future;
- e) The force would be opening new police stations across the region to build on connected good policing. The force would also be implementing a new crime recording system to achieve justice for victims however was acknowledged that the implementation phase would cause some issues over a number of months before the positive impact could be realised;
- f) The survey had been conducted online over a month period, constituents could ring the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and undertake the survey with staff. 7,318 people responded to the survey with 2,617 responding just to the budget. 4701 responded to the police station front desk survey. The survey respondents had influenced the budget and how the force would work with them going forward;
- g) More people considered the council tax precept as value for money;

- h) Police stations had provided a positive impact on community cohesion and had provided places of safety where people could engage with neighbourhood teams via email web chat. 70% of survey respondents agreed that investments should be made to open more police stations. 86% of respondents advised that they wanted to use police stations as places to record crime and 65% would like to share information with the police about what's going on in their communities. In response to this feedback the Commissioner would be opening 6 more police stations which would add to the six already opened in Tiverton, Bude, Newton Abbott, Falmouth, Penzance and Newquay;
- i) The Commissioner advised that she had honoured her pledge from the last precept meeting in January 2022 to see the largest recruitment drive in years, creating a new pipeline for the front line. In February 2023 the force would see its highest number of police officers recruited into the force of 3610 and since 2016 the force had increased its officers per 1,000 population from 1.8 to 2.02;
- j) The proposed precept would see investments made for a dedicated team exploiting technology to deploy enhanced officers more effectively and the precept would see £200,000 allocated within the budget;
- k) There would be investments made in firearms licensing due to the region having had the highest number of legally held firearms in Great Britain with no local powers to set the fee for the service;
- l) The Commissioner would be seeking investment to lock in the temporary investment that had already been made into firearms licensing to make it permanent. This investment was being made on the back of the Keyham tragedy and also due to the new government guidance that was released in October 2022 which required more checks and improved process. The investment in the budget would amount to £600,000;
- m) An investment of £262,000 a year was proposed with increases in the medium term into digital forensics which would provide the ability for the police to investigate crime effectively and efficiently to minimise the length of time victims, suspects and families were awaiting justice;
- n) The Commissioner highlighted the forces effective response to drugs in the region which had seen the force collaborate across the southwest region. Operation Scorpion had seized suspected drugs worth an estimated £797,000; £363,000 of cash; 391 arrests; weapons seized and destroyed. 85% of respondents in the survey were supportive of further investment in those joint operations between southwest forces to tackle drug dealing in the region;
- o) The Commissioner had been impressed with Operation Medusa and had wanted to invest in order to secure a closer working relationship with both the police and crime commissioner and police force in Merseyside to tackle county lines coming from Liverpool and the surrounding area;

- p) The focus on the four priorities would see the budget for those areas increase to £9 million due to increases in grants from the Government for victims and violence;
- q) The Commissioner acknowledged that her precept request had been in the context of unprecedented pressure for all constituents and local authorities with limited resources. The force had driven £8.6 million in efficiency savings but with inflation levels running above 10% and the rising costs of energy, the Police would not be able to maintain services at its January 2023 level without the use of £3 million of reserves as well as the increase in council tax. The alternative would be to cut the number of police officers and staff;
- r) The Commissioner requested the Panel to support the precept of 6.8% equivalent to £15 for a Band D property or £1.50 if paid over 10 months by direct debit;

Nicola Allen, Treasurer for the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) presented a detailed report to the Panel and highlighted the following key points:

- s) Grant levels would remain the same but that £15 council tax flexibility would be applied for 23/24 instead of the assumed £10;
- t) It had been assumed last year there would be a 2.5% pay award for police staff, however this had increased to 5% which equated to £7.8 million. The Home Office provided grant funding but it had covered half which meant Devon and Cornwall Police had to cover the shortfall;
- u) Inflation had been the biggest issue on the budget, it was assumed to be 5% but due to energy rises this had now increased to 11.1%;
- v) As part of the consultation, responses had been due on 30th January 2023 and all Police and Crime Commissioners were expected to provide details on efficiencies and productivity included in their budgets to demonstrate that they weren't just looking for council tax increases as the first point of call. The Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Commissioner responded highlighting opportunities for the government to look at national barriers they could help the region with and to support the force in getting over those barriers;
- w) Overall the Police had been looking at additional funding of £523 million which had come through to policing;
- x) £174 million had been announced as an increase to grant. The CSR in 2021 announced £100 million so the Police would receive an additional £74 million than expected. The force had been given monies to support the pay award for 22/23 however were deducted £70 million due to the reversal on the National Insurance that had been done in Autumn 2021;

- y) The additional funding had been dependent on the national uplift in police officers of which totalled £275 million of specific grant. This had increased by £140 million which £6.5 million would be at risk if the force did not maintain police officer levels;
- z) £349 million had been assumed as the council tax flexibility, the figure assumed that all commissioners would take the £15 flexibility available to them. Overall the increase as published for Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly would be 4.3%;
- aa) For Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly's provisional settlement this meant there would be provisions for a 2% pay award for police officers and staff. For every 1% on the pay award in equated to £3.3 million for the force per annum;
- bb) The National uplift in officers needed to be maintained until at least 2024, the force did not know what the requirement would be to maintain officers in 24/25 but if officers numbers were not maintained £6.5 million would be at risk;
- cc) Continuation of the pension fund had been agreed at a total of £153 million and for Devon and Cornwall Police this equated to £3.3 million. This had been agreed the last time police officers received a re-evaluation of their pension scheme and this had been a specific grant since;
- dd) The Home Office had ceased capital grant money for 22/23 which would not be reinstated in 23/24;
- ee) The proposal before Panel would see the grant requirement increase to £384.4 million which would be an increase of 12.8 million on 22/23;
- ff) A capital programme of £71 million over 4 years and covered vehicles, estates, IT and equipment;
- gg) There would be increased funding of £16.1 million (4.3%);
- hh) Staffing equated to 85% of the overall budget which had been a major risk factor, 58% had been for police officers, 27% for police staff. If the force required to maintain police officer numbers the majority of savings would need to be found on 42% of the budget;
- ii) There had been pressures of £23.9 million on pay and inflation and when put against the additional funding of £16.1 million it represented a gap of £7.8 million. Within that the force had been looking at £4.6 million for gas and electricity with increases of both over 100% compared to 22/23. This increase had been due to a cease of being on a fixed contract which would end on 31 March 2023;
- jj) Pay increases were expected to be £19 million which had been due to an increase in the base for 21/22 which would be caught up on for 22/23 prior

to provision for 23/24. Within Pay and inflation, pension re-evaluation had been included for the Local Government Pension scheme which had seen Devon and Cornwall's fees increase by £1.8 million for next year;

- kk) The force would be looking at savings and efficiencies of £8.6 million of which £3.9 million of efficiency savings, planned reductions for temporary teams and other mitigations such as cost reductions, holding police staff vacancies and workforce flexibility;
- ll) Within the proposals it was not being forecast to do any external borrowing in 23/24 but it was noted that it would be likely the need to do some in 24/25;
- mm) Inflation in November 2022 was recorded at 10.7%, November 2021, 5.1% and in November 2020, 0.3%. Electricity costs would go up by 103% and cost £2 million for 2023/24 with gas at 129% or £800,000. Fuel had remained fairly static, fuel estimates had been based on the service having to do 15 million miles a year, this is not a service which could be reduced;
- nn) People and companies had become more selective about the tenders that they were bidding for and were only interested in tenders that were negotiated rather than fixed with the reason being due to inflation. The building costs index for inflation had been 7.4% but this had increased in the southwest up to 11.1% this figure did not take into account the delays in supplies;
- oo) The council tax base had increased by 1.36%, it had been estimated to be 1.5% with the decrease due to collecting authorities raising the cap for supporting working families from 80-100%;
- pp) There would be a surplus of £1.6 million and this would be the final year in which the force would pay £863,000 back on the deficit;
- qq) Additional tax support would be available for Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly at a total of £3.3 million;
- rr) The Independent Audit Committee reviewed the reserves strategy and they had not brought forward any issues.

In response to questions raised it was reported that:

- ss) A contingency budget had been built into the net revenue budget to take into account inflation and contract awards in general which totalled approximately £3.5 million. The force had reviewed its capital programme or work that had been underway and put those projects on hold. The force had been in discussions with the Home Office and other Commissioners and the forecast of a 2% pay award had been in line with expectations nationally;
- tt) The Pay award for Police officers and staff would be on the 1 September and if there were any increases agreed for 22/23 the impact on 23/24 would be

for 7 months and not twelve. It was commented that organisation had been structurally constrained this year and future years in that the force needed to maintain police officer numbers but some areas of the organisation required police staff rather than officers;

- uu) From the 1st April 2023 and after the implementation to the changes in rules surrounding second homes. Cornwall Council would be doubling the council tax on those homes. The Devon and Cornwall police force would not see any increase in the council tax base until 24/25 year;
- wv) There hadn't been an estate in Paignton to open an enquiry office but the Commissioner had been looking at other options for the Paignton community;
- ww) The Chief Constable advised members that bureaucracy had been stripped back within the force and would continue to do so to deliver a good basic community service that would see more police officers in the community;
- xx) The OPCC would begin reporting within the performance scorecard at future meetings the footfall to public enquiry offices. The Commissioner advised the Panel that this wasn't the main measure to determine whether it was value for money as there had been wider challenges in relation to trust and confidence in policing and challenges on the 101 phone line. It was a requirement to show the public that the police were on their side and the ability to enable the public to access places of safety;
- yy) The overall staffing numbers for the organisation equated to 3,610 police officers, 193 PCSO's and 2,298 members of police staff;
- zz) Since the Commissioner took office there had been an increase in the precept by £88.72 or 51.33% increase;
- aaa) For Plymouth the rise in the precept would help to increase and maintain police officer numbers. The Chief Constable would like to see areas in which there had been Safer Streets funding more police officers for those areas. The Commissioner would be seeking the opening of the Devonport front desk which could bring front desk numbers in Plymouth to three.

The Panel agreed to:-

- I. Accept the council tax precept proposal.

For (13)

Councillors Alvey, Atiya-Alla, Croad, Dewhurst, Hackett, Knowles, Loudoun, Salmon, Samuel, Tilbey, Towill, Wright.

Against (0)

Abstain (1)
Councillor Reilly.

Absent/Did Not Vote (0)

(Please note that Councillor Reilly informed the officer during the meeting that she had pressed the wrong button during the vote and she had voted Abstain)

116. **Update Report on Contact Services within Devon and Cornwall Police**

Alison Hernandez, Police and Crime Commissioner, introduced the report and highlighted:-

- a) The data was unstable and was yet to be confirmed as sustainable, but 90% of 999 calls had been met within 10 seconds;
- b) The P1 and P2 phone lines were both being triaged so that people spoke to someone 'real' before they got put into any queues;
- c) The AACCC7 call back function was still experiencing issues but was being looked at as a priority and a substantive update would be given at the June 2023 meeting;
- d) 6 front desks had been re-opened and 6 more locations would be re-opened as the budget had been approved.

The Panel agreed to note the report.

117. **Commissioners Update Report**

Alison Hernandez, Police and Crime Commissioner, introduced the Commissioners Update report and highlighted:-

- a) That the Westcountry Women's Awards were held in Plymouth in December 2022 and the Police and Crime Commissioner had sponsored the Violence Against Women and Girls Category, and the shortlisted women had been invited to a meeting with the Police and Crime Commissioner to discuss how the dignity of women could be improved throughout the criminal justice system.

The Panel agreed to note the report.

118. **Police and Crime Plan 2021 - 25 Scorecard**

Alison Hernandez, Police and Crime Commissioner, highlighted the following point:-

- a) The number of ASB incidents reported in the Police were on a downward trajectory but it was known that the data integrity around ASB could have been better and was not being recorded correctly and so she did not want to put a direction of travel on that item and would report to the next meeting with a better way of recording this;
- b) An update would be provided at the June 2023 meeting on the impact of crime on young victims and their lives.

Councillor Roger Croad (Chair) added:-

- c) It was of deep concern that domestic violence was increasing, although this could be due to more people coming forward and reporting it and emphasised the need for everyone to do all that they could to reduce it;
- d) Thanks to the OPCC for making the scorecard and the data clear and easier for members to understand;

In response to questions it was reported:-

- e) The number of hate crimes had increased by nearly 1000 over a 12 month period;
- f) The Police and Crime Commissioner would not be adding another pledge to reduce hate crime as this was encompassed in a pledge as a mission critical indicator in the Police and Crime Plan Monitoring, so whilst it wasn't one of the four priorities, it did come under violent crime;
- g) The Police and Crime Commissioner was trying to assess the hypothesis "Are you safe walking down the street in Devon and Cornwall, without being targeted because of who you are?" and some initial data had been collected and scrutiny was to be undertaken on it, the outcome of which would be reported to the committee at the June 2023 meeting;
- h) The focus when looking at hate crime would be race and sexuality;
- i) It was important that hate crime was reported so that people could be supported and a clearer picture could be seen;
- j) Tackling hate crime was a priority for the Chief Constable.

The Panel agreed to note the report.

119. **Complaints Against the Police and Crime Commissioner Received Under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act**

Frances Hughes, Chief Executive at OPCC, provided an update to the panel and highlighted:-

- a) There had been one new complaint against the Police and Crime Commissioner and the report suggested that the matter had been resolved, but in the days before the meeting, correspondence had been received, so she would be speaking to the Chair of the Panel shortly regarding it.

In response to questions it was added:-

- b) It is possible to get data on upheld complaints from other areas across the country, but they were dealt with differently in different areas, however data would be provided at the next meeting.

The Panel agreed to note the report.

120. **Work Programme**

In response to questions on the work programme it was explained:-

- a) Members would continue to get an update at each meeting on steps being taken to improve the 101 service until there was more confidence in it.

The Chair encouraged members to contact him or Ross Jago (Head of Governance, Performance and Risk) if they had anything further they wanted to add to the work programme.