

Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Panel

Friday 17 October 2014

PRESENT:

Councillor Croad, Chair,
Councillor Rule, Vice-Chair.
Councillors Barker, Batters, Eddowes, Excell, Haywood, James, Rennie, Saltern, Sanders, Kate Taylor (substitute for Councillor Penberthy), Toms (substitute for Councillor Brown) and Wright.

Independent Members: Ms Atkinson and Ms Rapson.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Brown, Hare-Scott, Inch, Penberthy and Sutton.

Also in attendance: Sarah Hopkins, Community Safety Partnership Manager, Jo Heather, Portfolio Advisory and Scrutiny Officer, Cornwall Council, Tony Hogg, Police and Crime Commissioner, Andrew White, OPCC Chief Executive, Lisa Vango, OPCC, Shaun Sawyer, Chief Constable, Emma Webber, Force Strategic Manager, Councillor Tisdale, Stithians Parish Council, Camborne, Councillor Robert Drew, Carn Brea Parish Council, Jeremy Joslin, President Hayle Chamber of Commerce, and Katey Johns, Democratic Support Officer

The meeting started at 10.30 am and finished at 3.00 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.

15. **Councillor Roy Duncan**

The Chair reported on the sad passing of Councillor Roy Duncan, panel member from the Isles of Scilly, and asked the panel to join with him for a few moments of quiet reflection. The thoughts and sympathies of the panel were with Roy's wife, family, friends and colleagues at this sad time.

16. **MINUTES**

Agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2014, subject to the addition of the presence of Councillor Batters and the correction of Tony to Andy Boyd in minute 3.

17. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following declaration of interest was made in respect of items under consideration at the meeting –

Name	Minute No	Reason	Interest
Councillor Excell	20 - 26	Executive Lead for Torbay's Safer Communities Partnership	Personal

18. **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

There were no questions from members of the public.

19. **APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBER TO REPRESENT CORNWALL AND ISLES OF SCILLY**

The Chair thanked Councillors Rule and James for their assistance on the selection panel along with Jo Heather, Cornwall Council, for supporting them in this process. Agreed to appoint Ms Sarah Rapson as the Independent Member representing Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly for a period of four years commencing 17 October 2014.

20. **SCRUTINY OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER'S AND CHIEF CONSTABLE'S DEVON AND CORNWALL POLICE PUBLIC CONTACT STRATEGY - STATION ENQUIRY RATIONALISATION**

The panel undertook a post-decision scrutiny review of the Police and Crime Commissioner's joint announcement with the Chief Constable to rationalise station enquiry offices. In preparation for the scrutiny, the Host Authority, on behalf of the panel and in liaison with the Chair and Vice-Chair, prepared and presented a report which included details of a wide range of community and stakeholder engagement and other evidence which aimed to assist the panel in establishing for itself the level of knowledge, understanding and any concerns that existed about the proposals, and particularly in the areas directly affected.

Many responses were received and an analysis of the feedback was summarised in the report. Given that much of the feedback came from a number of Town and Parish Councils in Cornwall and, of those that responded, many said that they were unaware of the proposals and did not recall being consulted, the following witnesses were invited to the panel to give evidence -

- Councillor Pete Tisdale, Stithians Parish Council, Camborne
- Councillor Robert G Drew, Carn Brea Parish Council
- Mr Jeremy Joslin, President, Hayle Chamber of Commerce

Their feedback combined and summarised below included concerns about –

- Reliability of the footfall data that determined the proposals
- Lack of Policing particularly at peak times in 'holiday destinations' during the summer
- That some older people may be less likely or less able to contact the Police via modern IT access as opposed to face to face contact

- The lack of Police presence at community meetings and reducing or no 'monthly reports' provided
- The varying degree or lack of telephone signals in some parts of Cornwall and therefore lack of mobile phone and internet connectivity
- Effectiveness and reach, and lack of the consultation particularly with Town and Parish Councils about these proposals
- Lack of the resilience of the alternative means to contact the Police that are timed to coincide with the proposed closures
- Little or no knowledge of, and unable to find/access the 'Contact Strategy' or 'local engagement plans' and if they exist, why haven't they been created 'with' communities?
- Suspicion of the research methodology and decisions made on the basis of 'professional judgement'
- Communities haven't been asked 'what they want' and 'how they can help'
- The efficiency and effectiveness of the 101 service and that due to these issues, incidents were failing to be reported as there was no faith in the service
- Processing issues linked to safeguarding
- Concern that Falmouth's offer for its One Stop Shop to be used as a community hub was 'turned down'
- The public's perception that their safety could be jeopardised by the closures and that the closures would distance the Police from the public, potentially fostering a "them and us" culture.

Their feedback also included some suggestions, namely:

- Consider a 'Blue Light Information Centre' model, possibly hosted by the Chamber of Commercies and using volunteers.
- Consider using more honest terminology when communicating – say 'closures' rather than use the term 'rationalisation'.
- Consider communities for 'self-help' solutions and involving communities in co-designing solutions in the future.
- If Police are no longer attending Town and Parish Council meetings, it would be helpful if the Police communicate this and explain why and what alternatives there might be.

After considering the evidence and hearing from witnesses, the panel posed a number of questions to the Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable which were responded to as follows -

- Consultation was largely based on letters, footfall and the evidence base and engagement from 2010. These stations hadn't been closed in 2010/11 because it was anticipated that the Country would be out of recession by 2014, however, as a result of further pressures brought about by the Comprehensive Spending Review it had been necessary to revisit the situation.
- A lesson has been learned about being more inclusive of Town and Parish Councils in Cornwall in future consultations.

- The conundrum is if cuts are not made here, then where?
- The Contact/Engagement Strategy takes us to 2018 – this not a retreat from public engagement. But there are 400 less Police Officers.
- Front Office provision is not an ‘engagement function’.
- Two footfall surveys were undertaken in November and August 2010/11 and March 2014.
- 999 did fall below 90% during summer. It was a busy period, and Control Room staff had been taking longer to complete new formulaic ‘vulnerability assessments’ along with the implementation of the new Unify system all of which have had an impact.
- The Chief Constable is confident that 101 will not be impacted by front desk closures.
- The PCC has undertaken a detailed review of 101. The fieldwork is complete and a definitive report is being written on performance of the 101 service. This will be published and provided to the PCP at its next meeting. Desired standards will be worked through.
- There is an appointment system in place which needs ‘tweaking’ and needs making more visible to the public and quicker to make those appointments.
- The Chief Constable is looking at how Blue Phones can jump the queue to the top of 101.
- An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out for the last and this review including direct liaison with members of the Strategic Independent Advisory Group. Also a community impact assessment was carried out.
- The PCC has officers in his team looking at Safe Places Scheme.
- The Chief Constable advised there weren’t that many alternative options but is happy to share them. Using volunteers in Police Stations was considered, but in law people cannot be made redundant and then replaced with volunteers.
- It was acknowledged that the Police has failed to get the message across in Cornwall about the closures – but had done better at getting the message across in Devon.
- All but £6m of our Police reserves are held against specific plans. There are plans for the forward and effective use of our reserves. Reserves are never a means of sustaining ongoing operational requirements.
- £750,000 is in effect being reinvested into e.g. 101 and to improve technology but sustainability over the next four years is important. The reality is it will not be reinvested, but will contribute to a £14.8m budget gap. The Police are re-engineering and changing services in a way that is responding to communities and which may include more people in call centres.
- Much of the construction of the next four years relates to the Police reserves in the fourth year, and what the Police are trying to do over the next four years. There is a smoothing fund to try and smooth the vagaries of Policing and year on year, with e.g. council tax changes which are audited by the PCP, that money will contribute to the ‘in and out’ of smoothing funds and reserves over a four year period which will be looked at as part of the budget for next year. Debate re the necessity, as the pressure comes on, to redefine the reserves position and looking at taking ‘risk on risk’ on reserves, there are risks to consider including job evaluation and A19 which are all built into the reserves.

- The Police are closing front offices, but are not closing police stations. They are looking at joint agency, One Stop Shops including using Falmouth Station differently. They could provide a report on all the joint work on buildings.
- In the previous round of closures Okehampton was kept open even though the business case did not stack up for Okehampton, along with keeping Launceston open. However, the Chief Constable could not justify keeping Okehampton open in this round. However, Launceston remains a particular concern to the Chief Constable and to the PCC. The custody suite is the factor at Launceston and why that has been kept open. A large amount of footfall at Launceston is in relation to visits to the detainees in custody centre itself.
- The Estates Programme is an important and complex one. The PCC can now take a more business approach to sites to boost revenue through entrepreneurial means.
- Acknowledged that there is a huge gap in how remaining front enquiry desks are distributed in Cornwall. Whilst a concern, it is about encouraging other means to contacting Police. Launceston is a particular concern.
- The Chief Constable is happy to share the engagement plans. The view is that people are not visiting police stations, it is about the Police getting out into communities.
- There are 400 less Police Officers, but PCSO numbers have not been reduced where other forces have cut them. There are 10% less Police Officers than 4 years ago and may continue to reduce. This is about the public playing a greater part and making communities more resilient.
- This is about legitimacy of policing, the public interpret this as 'presence'. However, there are other challenges where officers are pulled into other less visible areas, e.g. domestic abuse, internet/cyber-crime, but are still keeping people safe.
- Acknowledged by the PCC and Chief Constable that they need the support of the Panel to help get messages out there.
- The Engagement Plans are work in progress. They are there, and in development. People can use Crime Online and the appointment system.
- The PCC advised that the decision about these closures has been made but the PCC offered to provide information as to how the consultation is working.
- Consultation on any review of custody centre provision including in Launceston is just starting. A plan/proposals have yet to be put to the PCC by the Chief Constable.

On behalf of the panel, the Chair thanked the witnesses, Commissioner and the Chief Constable for their time and attendance and advised that the panel would present its findings following a brief adjournment for lunch.

(The meeting adjourned at 12.45 pm and reconvened at 1.25 pm)

21.

FINDINGS FROM SCRUTINY OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER'S AND CHIEF CONSTABLE'S DEVON AND CORNWALL POLICE PUBLIC CONTACT STRATEGY - STATION ENQUIRY RATIONALISATION

Having reviewed the written evidence, heard from the witnesses, and having conducted a comprehensive and searching question and answer session between the Police and Crime Panel, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable, the following findings were identified –

- Lack of engagement with Town and Parish Councils (particularly in Cornwall) has been acknowledged.
- A review of Police Custody Centres is in its infancy.
- No account of, or consideration has been given to, options for community-led models but there is clearly a will in communities to help Police with their challenges
- 101 still appears to be ineffective, which is a concern that has not been fully addressed and improved to coincide with these proposals being implemented. This is a key crime reporting tool and there is not a robust alternative
- There are not enough staff at the Contact Centre who deal with 101 calls.
- There is a possibility that 'Blue Phones' outside Police Stations could take priority in the 101 queue which is welcomed.
- Equality Impact Assessments have not been shared.
- A robust alternative for IT is needed – many people do not use, or are unable to use, or have no access (including connectivity) in rural areas and areas of poverty.
- Local Engagement Plans do exist and are in development.
- The alternative options to the front desk closure proposals were not shared.
- That the PCC has stated that the 'decision' has, in effect, been made about these closures which will commence from 31 October 2014.
- The public are not aware of the range of services on offer to discuss matters with the Police e.g. the option for a 'visit if prepared to wait'.
- It is not clear what joint working opportunities/initiatives are being undertaken now and what consideration is being made in relation to this in the future
- It is not clear what plans there are for the future use of the Police estates portfolio.
- Wider engagement, prior consultation and communication by the PCC is key and there is a need to work more together as a whole i.e. the PCP supporting the PCC who in turn supports the Chief Constable.
- The PCC needs to recognise the value of the role of the panel as not just being about scrutiny, but that it can also provide support and advocacy and there is a willingness amongst panel members to assist with communicating with communities.
- Whilst it is acknowledged and understood that public sector cuts are, in part, a driver of this decision, other factors include societal changes in general in preferred methods of communication.

The Police and Crime Panel therefore recommends that –

- (1) a mechanism for more effective engagement, communication and consultation, particularly with Town and Parish Councils about future decisions should be addressed and ensured;
- (2) that the PCP is consulted by the PCC at the earliest opportunity in respect of any review of Police Custody Centres and any other key decisions;
- (3) opportunities and the willingness that already exists in communities to help the Police with these and future challenges should be encouraged, considered and maximised on;
- (4) a report be provided to the PCP in respect of 101 performance and following the recent 101 consultation, with a more definitive and clearer statement being included in relation to its performance;
- (5) consideration be given in relation to increasing staffing levels in the Contact Centre dealing with 101 calls;
- (6) the possibility of the 'Blue Phones' outside Police Stations taking priority in the 101 queue should be explored;
- (7) the PCP be provided with Equality Impact Assessments for this and future decisions.
- (8) a robust alternative for IT should be developed to take account of the issue that many people do not use, or are unable to use, or have no access (including connectivity) in rural areas and areas of poverty. This alternative should be reported back to the PCP;
- (9) the Local Engagement Plans should be provided to the PCP along with any 'communication/contact strategy' and these documents should be made easily accessible to the public;
- (10) the PCP be provided with details of the alternative options considered in relation to the front desk closure proposals;
- (11) all consultation undertaken to inform the front desk closure proposals including this report from the PCP should be considered prior to a final decision being made;
- (12) the PCC should communicate more widely with the public regarding the range of options for meeting with Police officers;

- (13) The PCP be provided with details of any current joint working opportunities/initiatives that are being undertaken now and what consideration is being made in relation to this in the future;
- (14) the PCP be provided with the plan for the future use of the estates portfolio, including a more business/entrepreneurial approach;
- (15) consideration should be given to the value of the PCP's support and wider engagement, prior consultation and communication with the PCP in order to work as a whole i.e. the PCP supporting the PCC who in turn supports the Chief Constable;
- (16) consideration should be given in relation to how the PCP can assist with support, advocacy and the dissemination of information and communication to communities in respect of key decisions in the future.

Finally, the Chair reminded Members that Section 28 (7) of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 states that the PCP must publish any Reports or recommendations. This report will –

- be circulated to PCP Members for initial comment and then submitted in draft form to the PCC prior to 31 October 2014 for consideration prior to a final decision being made by the PCC and Chief Constable in relation to the front desk closures);
- then be formally reviewed and agreed by the PCP at its meeting on 19 December 2014 and following the meeting it will be published on the Host Authority's website and the Police and Crime Panel website with copies being sent to the witnesses.

22. **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER**

In accordance with the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, the Police and Crime Commissioner submitted his Annual Report for the panel's consideration. Mr Hogg drew Members' attention to the report's highlights which included –

- progress against the Police and Crime Plan Objectives | April 2013-31 March 2014
- an overview of performance for the period 2013/14
- force performance | April 2014 - 31 March 2014 against targets in the Police and Crime Plan
- the OPCC Treasurer's Report
- details of the OPCC's Governance and Accountability

Members then took the opportunity to respond to the report which included comments on -

- the Licensing system and issues concerning alcohol harm and pre-loading
- staff pay increases

- special Constables and PCSOs and powers of arrest
- collaboration opportunities both outside of and within the force area
- suggestions for the P&CC for further public relations opportunities
- social impact assessment of the work of the P&CC to date and the 3 top things achieved
- whether the PCC or the Chief Executive should be 'fronting up' good and bad news issues in the media
- early morning restriction orders
- child sexual exploitation

As a result of those comments and discussions, the Police and Crime Panel made the following recommendations and it was agreed that –

- (1) as part of the strategic alliance negotiations with Dorset, the PCC should give consideration to opportunities for collaboration with organisations within the force area;
- (2) the PCC forms closer links/liaises more closely and regularly with Licensing Committees across the force area to hear about what they are doing, and to share what the PCC is doing to tackle alcohol harm;
- (3) the PCC considers more regular appearances on, for example, Radio Cornwall as a means to promoting his work;
- (4) the PCC considers in the future who, between himself and the Chief Executive, is more responsible and appropriate for covering both positive and more controversial issues in the media;
- (5) the PCC considers providing to the PCP a 'forward plan' of public communications in respect of, and appended to, his regular performance reports to the PCP;
- (6) 'child sexual exploitation' and 'cybercrime' is given more emphasis and prioritisation in his next Police and Crime Plan.

23. **POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER'S PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Police and Crime Commissioner submitted an update on the performance measures set out in his Police and Crime Plan 2014-17. He reported that –

- (a) with regard to areas of improvement –
 - the long term trend in victim based crime was down
 - there had been an 11.3 per cent reduction in victim-based crime during June-August compared to the same period in the previous year

- total crime was showing a 3.5 per cent overall reduction
- (b) with regard to areas of significant change, violence without injury remained a particular challenge and trends in sexual abuse continued to rise;
 - (c) with regard to areas requiring a better understanding, a more complex picture was emerging in relation to domestic abuse and, whilst it was thought to be the product of a reduction in victimisation, further consideration of the matter was required before this could be confirmed to be the case;
 - (d) with regard to measures still being developed, work was continuing to develop baseline data and reporting arrangements required to enable assessment of the performance against the new framework;
 - (e) Appendix 1 to the report set out the performance measures and Appendix 2 contained slides from the recent Performance and Accountability Board.

In response to questions raised, Members were advised that –

- (f) the format for recording of deaths of offenders in custody was still emerging and there was no further detail currently available on that;
- (g) the performance measures set out in Appendix 1 to the report were lifted from the Police and Crime Plan and demonstrated improvement in performance within Devon and Cornwall and how this compared against performance nationally;
- (h) the 101 satisfaction survey captured the responses of callers whose calls had been answered and was not inclusive of calls that hadn't got through.

It was suggested that in order for the performance information to be more helpful to the panel if the data included the performance target, the performance actual and then whether the performance was rated at red, amber or green.

The panel noted the report.

24. **PROPOSED WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL**

The Chair referred Members to the panel's work programme for 2014-15 and advised that it would be kept under regular review as a standing agenda item. Following a brief discussion, the panel noted the work programme, subject to inclusion of the following additions –

- a briefing on the new arrangements for Victim Services
- a briefing from the Chief Constable on what was being done to tackle trafficking

25. **POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER'S UPDATE REPORT**

The Police and Crime Commissioner submitted an update reporting on the activities of the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and progress made in delivering the Police and Crime Plan since the last Police and Crime Panel meeting in June 2014. He commented on the report's highlights as follows –

Priority 1

- a comprehensive review of the 101 Service was being undertaken
- the second round of the small Grants Scheme had now concluded resulting in £103,000 being provided to 24 projects
- a safeguarding vulnerable people pilot, which was already showing encouraging signs of success, was under way in Torbay

Priority 2

- that several work streams were under way to tackle excessive drinking, the effects of alcohol and the impact of alcohol related policing, including improving education awareness and campaigning for minimum unit pricing

Priority 3

- work was under way to identify areas for potential improvement within Devon and Cornwall
- the potential for a possible strategic alliance with Dorset was being explored
- a revision of the Police estates, including relocating the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to Middlemoor

Priority 4

- sizeable agenda around transforming probation/rehabilitation which included an expected announcement of the preferred bidder for Victim Services on 1 November 2014;
- improving services to witness
- training for police officers and staff on understanding and awareness of mental health issues following introduction of a new Section 136 multi-agency protocol
- there had been a deep dive exercise on Out of Court Disposals
- work around criminal asset seizure and the potential to recover costs

Priority 5

- significant changes to victim support services – a separate report on this would be submitted to the panel's next meeting and Ian Ansell

who was heading up the new arrangement in the OPCC's team would attend to present the item

Priority 6

- the volunteer review was progressing with terms of reference having been established and the Investors in Volunteers quality standard was being used to benchmark current practices against a national standard. This was not policing on the cheap but would provide a service that offered local community based solutions within and across public sector agencies
- the performance measure within the Police and Crime Plan is to achieve 150,000 service hours annually for Special Constables by the end of plan period. Currently there were 592 Specials within the Force with a further 90 to begin training in November and a similar number to begin training by March 2015
- the first OPCC Devon and Cornwall Police Partnership Community Volunteer Awards took place on 26 September 2014
- commencement of public engagement exercises on a number of projects including restorative justice / community remedy

Members raised concerns with the speed of progression toward the possible merger with Dorset, commenting that they would not want to be left in a position where it was too late for them to be engaged.

The panel noted the update and welcomed the opportunity to hear more on Victim Services Commissioning at its next meeting.

26. **REPORT FROM THE OPCC IN RESPECT OF ANY NON-CRIMINAL COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE PCC**

The panel noted that no complaints had been received during the period 7 June – 1 October 2014.

27. **FUTURE MEETING DATES**

The dates of future panel meetings were noted as follows –

- 19 December 2014
- 6 February 2015 (Precept)
- 20 February 2015 (only required if Precept veto'd)
- 10 April 2015 (Provisional)