

Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Panel Extraordinary Meeting

Friday 30 October 2015

PRESENT:

Councillor Croad, in the Chair.

Councillor Batters, Vice-Chair.

Councillors Boundy, Excell, Martin (substitute for Councillor Geoff Brown), Penberthy (substitute for Councillor Philippa Davey), Mrs Pengelly, Saltern, Toms, Watson and Wright.

Independent Member: Yvonne Atkinson.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Geoff Brown, Philippa Davey, Eddowes, Mathews, Moulson, Sanders and Squires, Sutton and Sarah Rapson, Independent Member.

Also in attendance: Pete Aley, Head of Neighbourhood and Community Services, Sarah Hopkins, Community Safety and Partnerships Manager, Jo Heather, Democracy and Governance Officer, Cornwall Council, Katey Johns, Democratic Support Officer, Tony Hogg, Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Commissioner, Shawn Sawyer, Chief Constable, Andrew White, OPCC Chief Executive, Duncan Walton, OPCC Treasurer, and Lisa Vango, Strategy and Planning Officer.

The meeting started at 10 am and finished at 12.38 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.

28. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by members in regard to items under discussion at this meeting.

29. THE ESTATES STRATEGY FOR DEVON AND CORNWALL POLICE

The Police and Crime Commissioner's Chief Executive introduced the Estates Strategy 2015-21 for Devon and Cornwall Police. The Estates Strategy set out how the organisations' building portfolio would support delivery of the Police and Crime Plan and explained how the estate would assist the Force in achieving its mission to detect and prevent harm; protect the vulnerable and reduce crime.

The panel also received a presentation which was introduced by the PCC's Treasurer.

Members were advised that –

- (a) the Police and Crime Commissioner's estate supported the operation of some 5,800 officers and staff across 110,000m² and was large and expensive to maintain;
- (b) from November responsibility for direct management of property acquisitions and disposals would transfer from the Police to the Police and Crime Commissioner in order to seek greater property values and so that the process could be fast-tracked;
- (c) the current value of the estate of 131 buildings over 103 sites was estimated at £129m;
- (d) the average age of buildings was 45 years which, between them, had a maintenance backlog costing in the order of £15m;
- (e) out of the 43 Police Forces in the country, Devon and Cornwall was 8th in terms of operational cost per m², however, there was a lot of surplus space which could be released/reduced to minimise costs;
- (f) since the last Comprehensive Spending Review work had been ongoing to reduce the number of surplus buildings and replace with modern, fit-for-purpose facilities. As at April 2015, savings achieved in running costs totalled £640k per annum;
- (g) in recent years a number of co-location arrangements had been progressed and work was continuing with partners to identify additional sites.

In response to questions raised, Members heard further that –

- (h) provided a property or site met all the necessary criteria resources would be made available to accelerate its progression in order to achieve the necessary savings;
- (i) decisions on which buildings were identified for disposal were based on their size, condition and location. To date 30 buildings had been identified;
- (j) discussions had taken place with commercial property experts and one or two had expressed a keen interest in working with the OPCC in taking the matter forward. In addition, talks had taken place with the public sector, particularly Cornwall Council, and opportunities there were also being explored.

The panel noted the report.

30. **THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER'S PROPOSALS FOR CONSULTING THE PUBLIC IN RESPECT OF A POTENTIAL INCREASE IN THE PRECEPT**

The Chair advised that, contrary to the published agenda, there would be one discussion on this item under Part I only. The Police and Crime Commissioner then

went on to report that there would be a presentation on the item which would be given in three parts as follows –

- brief introduction – Police and Crime Commissioner
- impact of savings on policing – Chief Constable
- proposals for public consultation on potential precept increase – Police and Crime Commissioner and OPCC Chief Constable

Members were advised that –

- (a) Devon and Cornwall Police had led the way in challenging the Government's funding formula and would continue to do so;
- (b) the implications of the proposed savings were dire and if they were presented in risk register format they would be displayed as red;
- (c) the National Audit Office was of the opinion that the Government had not fully understood the impact of the savings being sought;
- (d) the regions' MPs had been slow to respond to the concerns raised;
- (e) crime was changing and traditional methods of policing would have to change in order to achieve the savings required. Low, medium and high risk crime and associated service provision would have to be categorised into what must be done, should be done and could be done;
- (f) no decision had been made in regard to holding a referendum. It was merely the Commissioner's intention to gauge public appetite for one and whether or not there would be any support for an increase to the precept;
- (g) if an excessive increase was proposed then two separate budgets would need to be presented to the panel at the precept meeting on 5 February 2016.

In response to questions raised, Members heard further that –

- (h) the format for the ballot question was prescribed by statute;
- (i) copies of the presentation slides would be circulated to the panel after the meeting;
- (j) by stopping recruitment, and through the process of natural retirement, a number of posts could be reduced without the need for redundancies;
- (k) sharing the Force's dog services with HMRC and exploring crowd funding opportunities were already under consideration;
- (l) in addition to use of a statistics agency to undertake a poll, the consultation would also be circulated to local authority leaders, senior

members of society and publicised using social media;

- (m) the OPCC was aware that the south west had a number of areas of deprivation and this had been taken into consideration in its submission. Unfortunately, the Government used deprivation measures which favoured urban areas and not rural areas such as Devon and Cornwall;
- (n) the funding formula calculation hadn't taken the effects of Tourism on the area into account either;
- (o) any increase to the precept would be a percentage increase of the police's share of the Council Tax (10%) not a percentage increase of the Council Tax as a whole.

Members welcomed the Commissioner's engagement on his consultation proposals and made the following suggestions –

- that any demonstration of a potential increase should include the monetary value in addition to the percentage;
- details of the number of officers and types of services to be effected should be provided;
- use of the Commissioner's public roadshows to publicise the consultation to maximum effect.

The panel noted the presentation and supported the Police and Crime Commissioner's proposals. It was agreed that the Chair, on behalf of the panel, and, with the assistance of the Lead Officer, would write to the regions' MPs to lobby their support in parliament for a review of the funding formula.

31. **FUTURE MEETING DATE/S**

Future meeting dates were confirmed as –

- 11 December 2015
- 5 February 2016 (Precept)
- 19 February 2016 (if Precept Veto'd)
- 15 April 2016

32. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.