

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

Subject: Proposed merger of Devon and Cornwall Police and Dorset Police

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 14 August 2018

Cabinet Member: Councillor Sally Haydon, Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Customer Focus

CMT Member: Giles Perritt, Assistant Chief Executive

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Ref:

Key Decision: No

Part: I

Purpose of the report:

The Chief Constables of Devon and Cornwall Police and Dorset Police with the Police and Crime Commissioners for each force area have proposed a merger of the two forces, creating the largest police force by geographical area, and the fourth largest by population of the 43 forces in the country. The decision to proceed with the merger will be made at ministerial level within the Home Office, and will require the endorsement of the Police and Crime Commissioners of both forces.

Plymouth City Councillors and officers have been briefed about the broad aims and benefits of the merger, but the business case providing evidence to support the proposal will not be available to stakeholders for their views prior to its submission to the Home Office. This report addresses some of the implications of the proposed merger for Plymouth, and makes recommendations to Council that further information is shared with the Council prior to the submission of any proposal to the Home Office so that informed feedback can be given about the significant implications for the city.

Corporate Plan:

The Council's values as set out in the plan are not served by the proposed merger process. The Council has committed to provide strong, democratic community leadership in decisions affecting the city, to care about the impact of the actions of others, to be open and champion fairness, and to work with partners to serve the best interests of the city and its communities.

There is insufficient evidence available to allow the Council to fulfil its role in advocating for the city and mitigating the potential risks of the merger.

In addition, a number of priorities are dependent on close cooperation with the police force to deliver. The recommendations of this report will support an approach more aligned with the values and priorities of the Corporate Plan.

Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications: Including finance, human, IT and land:

A revised policing model could have implications for the Council's financial planning, but without a business case it is not possible to describe or quantify what these may be.

Other Implications: e.g. Child Poverty, Community Safety, Health and Safety and Risk Management:

A single policing model will need to be written for a single force which may have significant impacts for the Council's Community Safety plan.

A consideration of risks will not be possible prior to the release of the Business Case.

Equality and Diversity:

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? A merger is likely to have significant equality and diversity implications. An equality impact assessment would be undertaken as part of the consideration of the Business Case.

Recommendations and Reasons for recommended action:

- I. Cabinet agrees to express its severe reservations to the Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners of the Devon and Cornwall and Dorset police forces about the proposed merger of Devon and Cornwall Police with Dorset Police, specifically the proposal's failure to adequately address:
 - i. Essential practice of providing key stakeholders with full details of the proposed merger until the engagement period has concluded. This raises considerable alarm about the lack of transparency and failure to disclose key facts that would enable informed feedback from stakeholders;
 - ii. Opportunities to formally consult with key stakeholders such as Local Authorities on a process that directly impacts local areas and local communities;
 - iii. Financial modelling sufficient to justify the proposal, or to demonstrate value for money to citizens;
 - iv. Discrepancies in how additional income will be generated and allocated as a result of the merger, with specific reference to funding the proposed additional 430 police officers or staff;
 - v. Whether any increase in revenue to the proposed merged force will be reinvested back into the city's policing offer;
 - vi. Whether policing resources will be committed to meet the specific needs of urban areas such as Plymouth, given its status in the force area, and how Plymouth's policing model will be affected;
 - vii. Whether the merger will result in further reductions in neighbourhood policing, specifically Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and neighbourhood beat managers (NBMs);
 - viii. Whether the city will remain a Basic Command Unit within the new force, and what commitments are made to the visibility of senior police staff and the Police and Crime Commissioner in the city within a greatly enlarged force area;
 - ix. The impact assessment of the merger, specifically with respect to equalities and diversity, and as a result of any potential rise in council tax payments on the city's most vulnerable residents;
 - x. The failure to reference any intention to improve the condition and use of the police estate in Plymouth in line with the ambitions of a modern police force.

2. Recommend to Council that both Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables are requested to review their arrangements for consultation, endorsing the view set out in I(i – x) above, to allow Plymouth City Council and other key stakeholders to review a business case that fully addresses all the above concerns prior to its submission to the Home Office.
3. Recommend to Council to, irrespective of the outcome of the police merger proposal, endorse the following Policing Asks for the city:
 - Investment back into neighbourhood policing, specifically the provision of more PSCOs and Neighbourhood Beat Officers;
 - Improvements are made to local 999 responses;
 - Commitment to improve the condition and use of the police estate in Plymouth in line with the ambitions of a modern police force;
 - A spend profile for Plymouth that reflects the complexity of needs and demands of policing a major urban centre;
 - Retention of the city’s Basic Command Unit.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

Support for the proposed merger on the basis of evidence submitted so far would expose the city to unknown risks as set out in recommendation (I)

Published work / information:

Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable’s proposal

Background papers:

Title	Part I	Part II	Exemption Paragraph Number							
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Sign off:

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Originating SMT Member - Giles Perritt													
Has the Cabinet Member(s) agreed the content of the report? Yes													