
**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ESSEX POLICE AND CRIME PANEL HELD
AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD, ON 27 NOVEMBER 2014**

Present:

Councillor

Tony Hedley
Godfrey Isaacs
Bob Shepherd
Tim Young
Gary Waller
John Jowers
Mike Danvers
Stephen Savage
Jo McPherson
Mike Assenheim
Lynda McWilliams
Robert Chambers
John Gili-Ross

Representing

Basildon Borough Council
Castle Point Borough Council
Chelmsford City Council
Colchester Borough Council
Epping Forest District Council
Essex County Council (Chairman)
Harlow District Council
Maldon District Council
Rochford District Council (Vice-Chairman)
Southend Borough Council
Tendring District Council
Uttlesford District Council
Independent Member

Apologies for Absence

Graham Butland	Braintree District Council
John Newberry	Brentwood Borough Council
Penny Channer with Stephen Savage as her substitute	Maldon District Council
Mick Page with Lynda McWilliams as his substitute	Tendring District Council
Phil Smith	Thurrock Borough Council
Ann Haigh	Co-opted Member
Kay Odysseos	Independent Member

Councillor Jack Lawmon, Rochford District Council, was also in attendance.

The following officers were in attendance throughout the meeting:

Jane Gardner, Head of Commissioning Growing Essex Communities
Colin Ismay, Council and Member Support Manager, Essex County Council,
Secretary to the Panel

Fiona Lancaster, Committee Officer, Essex County Council

Nick Alston, the Essex Police and Crime Commissioner, and Lindsay
Whitehouse, Deputy Commissioner, were in attendance throughout supported
by the following officers:

Susannah Hancock, Chief Executive

Charles Garbett, Treasurer

Greg Myddelton, Assistant Director for Commissioning

The Secretary to the Panel reported that Ann Haigh had offered her resignation
as her Court commitments were leading to her failure to attend meetings. A
report on membership would, therefore, be made to the next meeting.

The Secretary to the Panel would be contacting Thurrock Borough Council concerning attendance.

1. Minutes

Subject to the first sentence of the seventh bullet of minute 6(c) (Public Engagement Programme) being amended to read "Some concern was expressed by the Panel regarding the removal of police attending Neighbourhood Action Panels (NAPs) and the ability of the police to run the local meetings", the minutes of the meeting held on 29 October 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations.

3. Questions to the Chairman from Members of the Public

There were no questions.

4. Actions arising from the last meeting

The Panel received report EPCP/048/14 by the Secretary to the Panel highlighting the matters raised during the previous meeting that required further action and indicating the action taken.

In relation to minute 6(b) (bullet 7), the Commissioner reported that he had received a response from the Chief Constable on the Panel's concerns regarding the new local police meetings. The Chief Constable had acknowledged there needs to be regular meetings held at convenient times for residents to enable them to engage with the police.

Panel members remarked that local meetings need to be advertised by various methods. The Commissioner would be contacting the Chief Constable to ask for the numbers attending the new local police meetings and for details of what was discussed.

5. Reports from the Police and Crime Commissioner

(a) Police and Crime Plan: Performance Report

The Panel considered report EPCP/049a/14 by the Commissioner updating the Panel on progress in delivering against the eight areas for focus within the Plan. The report focused on performance for April to June 2014 (Quarter 1) and July to September 2014 (Quarter 2).

The following points were made during the ensuing discussion.

- Significant investment was being made into dealing with Domestic Abuse. The Commissioner agreed to look into the reasons for the reduction in the solved rate for high risk domestic abuse offences.

- The Commissioner agreed to look into the rise in the number of first time entrants to the youth justice system in Southend.
- Some concern was expressed regarding the planned exits from drugs treatment data which showed a large decrease in numbers for Thurrock since Quarter 3 of 2013/14.
- Further investment had been made in education programmes for school age children through the 'Risk Avert' programme, and the Commissioner hoped that this programme would deliver benefits in the longer term. The programme will be offered to all secondary schools, although not all schools are currently engaged with the programme.
- In relation to the statistics on User Satisfaction, concern was expressed about residents not receiving feedback having reported a crime. The Commissioner expressed his concern about the need to improve communications.
- Incidences of crime are accurately recorded, assigned a reference number and are followed up.
- Concern was expressed about the growing trend towards internet based crime and online fraud. The Chief Constable has taken a national role relating to digital crime.

(b) Budget Issues

The Panel considered report EPCP/049b/14 by the Treasurer to the Commissioner's Office providing a summary of risks, issues and the local/national financial context to inform early discussions on the 2015/16 budget and precept.

The following points were made during the ensuing discussion.

- Members expressed concern that the combined impact of a reduction in Government grant and the cost of inflation would mean that Essex Police will be required to make annual recurring savings of a further £46m by 2017/18. Even with an increased precept there would still be a significant short fall in police funding. The impact of two murders in Colchester had also adversely affected the budget in 2014.
- The Chairman indicated that he felt the Panel would be sympathetic to a proposal for an increase in the precept based on the issues outlined by the Commissioner.
- The Panel urged the Commissioner, as Chairman of the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, to lobby the Government on the negative impact of further reductions in police budgets.

- The Home Secretary has undertaken to advise Commissioners at an earlier stage concerning capping arrangements. Commissioners have collectively communicated their concerns to the Home Secretary regarding the variation of funding across the forces and the inefficiencies of the Home Office Grant. The Commissioner indicated his intention to write personally to the Home Secretary on the situation for Essex.
- The Commissioner undertook to provide further details of the outcome of the review of the Police Estate.

(c) Victims' Commissioning

The Panel considered report EPCP/049c/14 by the Commissioner's Assistant Director for Commissioning which provided the Panel with:

- i) a summary of activity undertaken in relation to the commissioning of victims' support services in 2014/15; and
- ii) an update on the allocation of victim support services grant funding provided by the Ministry of Justice for 2014/15.

The Commissioner will provide reports to the Panel on progress in relation to the Victims Commissioning programme.

The following points were made during the ensuing discussion:

- All Police and Crime Commissioners had formally taken responsibility for the commissioning of local support services for victims of crime on 1 October 2014 with the remainder of commissioning responsibilities, referral and assessment of support for victims, coming to Commissioners from 1 April 2015. This gives Commissioners a real opportunity to provide a responsive service to local victims' needs.
- Funding had been devolved from the Ministry of Justice, with a one-off £640,000 capacity-building grant to support the setup of new systems and prepare local organisations for the new commissioning arrangements. A £600,000 commissioning grant had been provided for 2014/15, and a further £250,000 awarded for sexual violence services.
- The Ministry of Justice's Code of Practice for Victims of Crime sets out the minimum standards of service. The Commissioner will also need to ensure compliance with the EU Directive in support of victims of crime.
- The Panel considered the report to be a good one and welcomed the opportunity to be involved in the approach to commissioning victim services.

6. Accountability Structures: The Panel's draft response to the inquiry by the Committee on Standards in Public Life

The Panel considered report EPCP/050/14 by the Secretary to the Panel providing a draft response to be sent on behalf of the Panel by 30 November 2014.

The following points were made during the ensuing discussion:

- (Reference comment 1) It was not considered appropriate for panels to have powers to remove an elected official from office.
- (Reference comment 4) Add a statement about the Panel's concerns regarding the loss of the Neighbourhood Action Panels and the future uncertainty over the ability of the Police to manage local meetings.
- (Reference comment 6a) Amend the wording of the first sentence to state that the role does need further clarification to achieve better consistency nationally.
- (Reference comment 6c) Clarify the wording regarding the majority needed to veto the precept.
- (Reference comment 11) The Panel indicated that it would be helpful to have information on what Essex residents are looking at on the Commissioner's website.
- (Reference question 12) The Panel agreed that it would be helpful if the Commissioner could provide information regarding this area of interest.

The Secretary to the Panel was thanked by the Members for drafting a response on their behalf, which would now be amended in line with the comments made and submitted by the deadline.

7. Forward Look

The Panel considered report EPCP/051/14 by the Secretary to the Panel concerning the planning of the Panel's business.

The Secretary to the Panel reported Thursday 8 January 2015 (pm) as the date for the financial training event.

The Panel agreed the business proposed for the meetings scheduled in 2015. The next meeting on 29 January would focus on the Proposed Police Precept for 2015/16, and other agenda items would be kept to a minimum to allow for sufficient scrutiny. Panel Members were encouraged to attend the January meeting, or to send substitutes if they were unavailable.

Following the successful introduction of a private pre-meeting to enable the Panel to plan for meetings and develop key lines of enquiry, the Panel decided

that the 29 January pre-meeting should start at 13:45 to allow sufficient time for discussion.

8. HMIC PEEL Inspections

The Panel noted report EPCP/052/14 by the Secretary to the Panel regarding the launch of HMIC's new PEEL (police efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy) assessments website. Members were encouraged to access the website to see how the Essex Police Force compares with other Forces.

9. Update on On-going issues

The Commissioner reported that he was holding an Essex Police Challenge meeting in Thurrock on 11 December 2014, giving an opportunity to allow scrutiny of the Chief Constable in public. Panel members were encouraged to attend.

The Panel was reminded that the Commissioner's Annual Conference was being held on Wednesday 14 January 2015, at the Community Stadium, Colchester.

In the context of the Peel Assessment's rating of how the Essex Force investigates offending, the Commissioner commented that significant issues regarding performance and investigation handling were being addressed with the Chief Constable, and he would report back to the Panel on the scrutiny of these issues.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The Panel noted that the next meeting would take place at 14:30 on Thursday 29 January 2015, in Committee Room 1, County Hall, and that this would be preceded by a private pre-meeting starting at 13:45.

Chairman
29 January 2015