

## **MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ESSEX POLICE AND CRIME PANEL HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD, ON FRIDAY 29 JANUARY 2016**

Present:

### **Councillor**

Tony Hedley  
Graham Butland  
Colin Riley  
Bob Shepherd  
Tim Young  
Gary Waller  
John Jowers  
Tony Durcan  
Stephen Savage  
Jo McPherson  
Martin Terry  
Lynda McWilliams  
Jane Potheary  
Susan Barker  
John Gili-Ross

### **Representing**

Basildon Borough Council  
Braintree District 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  
Southend Borough Council  
Tendring District Council  
Thurrock Borough Council  
Uttlesford District Council  
Independent Member

### **Apologies for Absence**

William Russell	Brentwood Borough Council
Godfrey Isaacs with Colin Riley as his substitute	Castle Point Borough Council
Penny Channer with Stephen Savage as her substitute	Maldon District Council
Ian Gilbert with Martin Terry as his substitute	Southend Borough Council
Jim Gordon with Susan Barker as his substitute	Uttlesford District Council
Kay Odysseos	Independent Member

County Councillors Nigel Le Gresley, Michael Mackrory and Stephen Robinson were also in attendance.

The following officers were in attendance throughout the meeting:

Anna Hook, Commissioning Support Manager  
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, was in attendance throughout supported by the following officers:

Susannah Hancock, Chief Executive  
Charles Garbett, Treasurer

## **1. Minutes**

Subject to the insertion of a new bullet point in minute 5 ((a) Finance Report and Budget Plans) to read “The Committee noted that operational police issues could be raised with local Crime and Disorder Partnership Panels.”, the minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **2. Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Martin Terry declared a personal interest in that he was standing as a candidate in the Essex Police and Crime Commissioner elections in May 2016.

Councillors G Butland, A Hedley and J Jowers declared a personal interest in that they were all members of the Essex Fire Authority (minute 6 below refers).

## **3. Questions to the Chairman from Members of the Public**

### **From Councillor Stephen Robinson**

Councillor Stephen Robinson asked for comments on the implications for the City, Borough and District Councils of Essex of the police force’s withdrawal from dealing with local issues such as parking obstructions and anti-social behaviour.

### **From Councillor Nigel Le Gresley**

Councillor Nigel Le Gresley asked for comments on whether the policy on community policing and the reduction in PCSOs would be re-considered if there was an increase in low level crimes.

### **From Councillor Michael Mackrory**

Councillor Michael Mackrory asked for details on the local policing teams, to include the number of PCSOs and dedicated police officers across Essex, and the number of individuals dealt with who had mental health issues.

The Chairman responded that these questions would be addressed as part of item 6 (The proposed Police Precept for 2016/17) on the agenda.

## **4. Actions arising from the last meeting**

The Panel received report EPCP/01/16 by the Secretary to the Panel highlighting the matters raised during the previous meeting that required further action and indicating the action taken.

The report was noted.

## **5. The proposed Police Precept for 2016/17**

The Panel considered report EPCP/02/16 and accompanying appendices by the Commissioner setting out the proposed precept for 2016/17.

The following points were made during the ensuing discussion.

- Members welcomed the improvement made to the detail and argument contained within the proposals in comparison with the previous year's report. A greater emphasis on outputs would be a helpful addition in future.
- Essex Police faced cost pressures of £12.4m in 2016/17, even with the unexpected news in the Autumn Statement 2015 that police budgets would be protected in line with inflation.
- The Commissioner's disappointment at the slow progress with the review of the Government's national Police Funding formula, given the potential monetary gain for Essex Police which had been historically underfunded in comparison with other forces over a number of years.
- Members acknowledged that expensive underutilised Estate assets such as police station frontline counters could not be kept.
- The Commissioner explained that an extra 100 specialist posts were being put into public protection to deal with the increase in hidden harms such as domestic abuse incidents. There would also be increased focus on cyber-crime and burglaries. Some of the specialist posts would be filled by civilians.
- Some Panel Members expressed the view that the reduction in PCSO numbers to 90 should be reconsidered in light of the negative effect this could have on local intelligence gathering. The Commissioner commented that the proposed staffing levels could be reassessed if Essex Police received an increased Government grant allocation, and if the PCSOs continued to deliver value. The Commissioner confirmed that there was still an opportunity for local councils to fund PCSOs.
- Members noted that there were over 300 Specials in Essex, although the turnover rate was high. More volunteers would be valued.
- The Commissioner reported that Essex Police would need to work in partnership with other authorities to ensure that issues such as dangerous parking and anti-social behaviour were dealt with appropriately. Members noted that around 20% of all Essex Police incidents involved dealing with individuals with mental health issues.
- The Treasurer to the Commissioner explained the re-shaping of the staff costs and emphasis away from local policing. He acknowledged that comparative tables would be useful.
- Some of the recent changes on how crimes could be reported by telephone or online had led to some Essex residents feeling more remote from their police service. Better communications and alternative ways of improving resident access to police officers were being explored.
- The need for efficiencies to be sought with costs relating to overtime being closely monitored and sickness absence rates improved.

- The Panel noted that Essex Police was expecting the results of its PEEL (police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy) inspection shortly.

Following consideration of the report and having listened to the Commissioner's justification of the need for an increase, the Chairman invited the Panel to vote on the Commissioner's proposal for a precept increase of 3.36%, equivalent to an increase of £4.95 a year from £147.15 to £152.10 for a Band D property and thus raising £3m of additional council tax receipts.

#### **DECIDED:**

That the Commissioner's proposal for a precept increase of 3.36 % be accepted.

Councillors M Terry and T Young requested that their names be recorded as having voted against.

Councillor Butland requested that his name be recorded as having abstained.

### **6. Forward Look**

Councillors G Butland, T Hedley and J Jowers declared a personal interest in this item (minute 2 above refers).

The Panel considered report EPCP/03/16 by the Secretary to the Panel concerning the planning of the Panel's business.

The Panel agreed to the suggestion that it would be helpful to receive an update on the process regarding closer working / collaboration between the Police and Fire Services, in the light of the recent Government announcements. It was acknowledged that a clear business case would be needed for the Commissioner to take this forward.

The report was otherwise noted.

### **7. Update on On-going Issues**

The Commissioner provided the Panel with a brief update on the following:

- The "Airwave" radio system contracts had been let in December and Essex Police was expected to move to the new secure emergency network in 2017. Members noted the high levels of risk associated with the project, in particular regarding reliability, coverage and funding. Essex and Kent Police were working together on a roll out model. The Commissioner advised the Panel to keep this issue under scrutiny.
- The Police Estates Transformation Programme had identified a new commercial partner to support the development of the programme. The Commissioner acknowledged that there needed to be better communication with Essex residents as police stations were closed and disposed of.

- Members were invited to contact the Commissioner for details on the Business Crime Forum.

#### **8. Date of Next Meeting**

The Panel noted that the next formal meeting would take place at 2.30 pm on Thursday 18 February 2016, in Committee Room 1, County Hall, and that this would be preceded by a private pre-meeting starting at 1.45 pm.

Chairman  
18 February 2016