

Minutes of the meeting of the Essex Police and Crime Panels' Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee, held in Committee Room 5 County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH on 9 November 2017 at 1.30 p.m.

Present:

Present	Representing
Cllr Penny Channer	Maldon District Council
John Gili-Ross	Independent Member
Cllr John Jowers	Essex County Council
Bob Shepherd	Chelmsford City Council
Roger Hirst	Essex Police and Crime Commissioner
Susannah Hancock	Chief Executive, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC)

The following officer was in attendance throughout the meeting:

Robert Fox Scrutiny Officer, Essex County Council

1 Apologies for Absence and Notices of Substitution

Councillor Godfrey Isaacs, Castle Point Borough Council and Kay Odysseos presented their apologies.

2 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting on 6 July 2017 were approved as an accurate record by those present. It was confirmed a verbal report of the last meeting was given to the full Panel on 20 July 2017.

3 Spit Guards

The Sub-Committee was joined for this item by Superintendent Clare Dixon, Tom Johnson and Ryan Whitear from Essex Police.

The officers demonstrated the spit guard and explained that clear conditions must be in place prior to application with the assailant hand-cuffed to the rear. The individual will have had to have spat or look as if they are about to spit and a verbal warning issued in advance of application. Officers' body cams mean thought has to go into the application of the guard. Apprehended individuals who spit are likely to be intoxicated with alcohol or have taken drugs and the risk of infection for police officers is increased. The guard provides another layer of personal protection for officers as well as being another issue to use in a proportionate and appropriate way. An audit trail will be kept of when and why the guards have been deployed.

Essex Police will be one of the last forces in the country to introduce the guards; and all officers trained in the use of them will carry them attached to their stab vests or belts inside a small pack with easy release. When receiving spit guard training officers will also receive personal safety and first-aid training. No officers will be provided with a guard until they have received the training programme. The Police Federation has been keen on the use of spit guards for many years;

and Kent Police have recently introduced them. The Chief Constable of Essex has looked at the implementation elsewhere prior to the Essex roll-out. There was some debate over which type of spit guard would be used in Essex before a decision was made. The guards have been tested and have the safety standard kitemark and CE marking.

A national decision model is used for risk, threat and harm; with the utilisation of the guard at the discretion of the police officer. Only in exceptional circumstances would a guard be deployed on an individual with learning disabilities or with a mental health problem. In the main it will be used on non-compliant and aggressive people. The more restraint that is used the more care and attention is needed. Once the guard is in place the individual is able to talk.

Officers who are spat at tend to consider individual circumstances prior to any Accident and Emergency visit. However, where blood is involved an A&E visit is undertaken, as it is with all bites. Officers also take advice from Occupational Health following the incidents. Hepatitis B jabs are no longer routinely given due to low stocks of the vaccine worldwide. The spit guards will be a preventative measure to block out potential infection.

The cost of the guards is around £2-£3 per unit; and every custody location will have a supply. It is anticipated the use of the guards will be occasional. Use of force data will capture deployment of the guards and this data is publicly published.

4 Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's Ethics and Integrity update

Roger Hirst updated the Sub-Committee on police and then fire and rescue ethics and integrity issues. With regard to police activity Operation Servator is being rolled-out into Colchester town centre whereby there will be an armed police presence with officers carrying long-arms. Operation Servator has been in place at Stansted and Southend Airports as well as the Lakeside Shopping Centre for some time. Other major towns will see the roll-out in further course, as part of the escalation of the terrorism threat levels. Mr Hirst stated he did expect to receive feedback from the public on the ethics of British Police Officers carrying firearms. There has been a press release informing residents of the roll-out in Colchester.

With regard to the fire and rescue service the Lucas Report, which was commissioned by the Fire Authority two years ago, identified a 'toxic culture' and dysfunctionality within the Essex Fire and Rescue Service. A change programme was implemented following the publication of the Lucas report with an independent Expert Advisory Panel established which included an former Chief Fire Officer from another Fire and Rescue Service; a senior FBU member from Northern Ireland; a senior ACAS member; and a university professor. The Panel has helped design an implementation programme which ECFRS are now delivering. This has recently been reviewed by Sir Ken Knight who found progress made, but still more work to do. .

Mr Hirst stated he had undertaken announced visits to 20 fire stations in the county and the feedback from the front-line was that whilst the atmosphere in the service is improving, things are not yet 'good'; and there is still some concern

about whistleblowing and raising concerns without consequence.

The cultural change programme is moving forward and in the first stages of implementation, but this has to happen as soon as practicable. There has been nine years of low recruitment for fire officers and there are still diversity issues – Mr Hirst has had conversations with the current chief Fire Officer to ‘widen the net’ in terms of recruitment.

A performance, learning and development, and review process is being put in place that will include behaviours as well as fire-related work issues. There must be a promotion process based upon merit. Discipline and grievance procedures are currently conducted through direct management and this will change also. Recruitment for a new Chief Fire Officer is underway with a job advertisement.

5 Future Items for the Sub-Committee

It was agreed that the next meeting will receive revised Terms of Reference for the Sub-Committee to take into account the fire service.

It was agreed the next meeting of the Sub-Committee concentrate on the culture change within the Fire & Rescue service following the Lucas and Knight reviews.

6 Date of Next Meeting

Dates for potential meetings in the latter part of February 2018 will be circulated to establish the next meeting.

Action: Robert Fox

With no further business identified the meeting closed at 3.25 p.m.

Chairman