

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ESSEX POLICE AND CRIME PANEL HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD, ON 19 JUNE 2014

Present:

Councillor

Tony Hedley
Graham Butland
John Newberry
Godfrey Isaacs
Ian Wright
Tim Young
Gary Waller
John Jowers
Penny Channer
Jo McPherson
Lynda McWilliams
Phil Smith
Robert Chambers
John Gili-Ross
Kay Odysseos

Representing

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

Apologies for Absence

Mike Danvers	Harlow District Council
Martin Terry	Southend Borough Council
Mick Page with Lynda McWilliams as his substitute	Tendring District Council
Bob Shepherd with Ian Wright as his substitute	Chelmsford City Council
Ann Haigh	Co-opted Member

The following Officers were in attendance throughout the meeting:

Colin Ismay, Council and Member Support Manager, Essex County Council, Secretary to the Panel

Fiona Lancaster, Committee Officer, Essex County Council

Jane Gardner, Head of Commissioning Growing Essex Communities, 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, Executive Director

Charles Garbett, Treasurer

The Chairman welcomed Councillors Hedley, Newberry and Smith to their first meeting of the Panel.

1. Election of Chairman

It having been moved by Councillor P Channer and seconded by Councillor L McWilliams it was

Resolved:

That Councillor J Jowers be elected Chairman.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

It having been moved by Councillor J Jowers and seconded by Councillor G Isaacs it was

Resolved:

That Councillor J McPherson be appointed Vice-Chairman.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

In relation to minute 6 (Update from the Chief Constable), Susannah Hancock undertook to obtain the information from the Chief Constable to respond to John Gili-Ross.

4. Declarations of Interest

The Chairman reminded members to declare any interests as appropriate throughout the meeting.

Councillor Hedley declared a personal interest as Chairman of the Essex Fire Authority.

5. Questions to the Chairman from Members of the Public

Councillor Stephen Savage, Maldon District Council, commented, as a member of the public, on part-night lighting and the adverse effect this may have had on the initial details that members of the public are able to provide to the police after incidents. The Chairman responded that part-night lighting would be considered under item 10 on the agenda.

6. Actions arising from the last meeting

The Panel received report EPCP/031/14 by the Secretary to the Panel highlighting the matters raised during the previous meeting that required further action and indicating the action taken.

7. The Work of the Police and Crime Panel

The Panel considered report EPCP/032/14 by the Secretary to the Panel providing an overview on the workings of the Panel and its relationship with the Police and Crime Commissioner.

(a) Membership

Following on from the District Elections in May, there had been a number of changes to the Panel's membership. The Panel considered whether the current proportionality satisfied the balanced appointment objective. Councillors Young, Butland and Isaacs indicated that they were content with the current membership balance and the continued co-option of Ann Haigh to represent the Liberal Democrats.

Resolved:

That no changes be made to the co-opted membership of the Committee.

(b) Terms of Reference and Achievements

The Panel noted its terms of reference and a brief outline of its achievements thus far. The Secretary to the Panel was asked to report back on the appropriateness of paying an allowance to the independent and co-opted members.

(c) Home Office Grant/Training

The Chairman referred to the funding available from the Home Office for 2014/15 and invited members' views on how this might be used to carry out the Panel's functions and responsibilities under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

The following points were made during the ensuing discussion.

- Professional and independent input would assist with the review of the Commissioner's budget.
- It would be helpful if the Chief Constable could contribute to the budget-making discussions to enable the Panel to look at the issues in the round.
- The inclusion of comparisons with comparable police forces could help.
- Financial scrutiny training would be of benefit.
- Guidance was needed for the Panel to understand what questions they should be asking. The Commissioner offered to help the Panel understand the difficult questions he faced.

(d) Publicity

The Panel thanked John Gili-Ross for the work he had undertaken on proposals for a greater web presence for the Panel. The Panel agreed to proceed on the basis outlined in the report, and for John Gili-Ross to work with the Secretary to the Panel.

The Panel noted that the County Council's Press Office could help prepare press releases and Kay Odysseos offered her assistance if needed.

(e) Networking

The Panel noted that there was an appetite from neighbouring Counties for some form of networking. The Secretary to the Panel agreed to take this forward.

(f) Landscape

The Panel noted the context within which the Panel worked and the inclusion of the Fire Service on the list of interested bodies.

Resolved:

- (i) That the training event already approved by the Panel be held on the morning of the September meeting or during July if a date is available.
- (ii) That a further training event be held on financial scrutiny prior to the November meeting.
- (iii) That the November meeting focus on the Commissioner's plans for the 2015/16 budget and the issues to be faced.
- (iv) That Panel members receive details of any national training events notified to the Secretary.

8. Reports from the Police and Crime Commissioner

(a) Performance update

The Panel considered report EPCP/033(a)/14 by the Commissioner covering progress in delivering against the eight areas for focus within the Police and Crime Plan.

The Panel welcomed an invitation to attend a briefing at Essex Police HQ with the Commissioner and Chief Constable Kavanagh to discuss the new local policing plans.

The Commissioner in providing background to the report referred to the fact that the Chief Constable was putting resources under local control based on a local hub model. The Chief Constable is engaging with district councils.

The following points were made during the ensuing discussion.

- The Commissioner acknowledged the concern expressed over the proper recording of incidences of fraud and the clear up rate and undertook to review the information on line.
- The Commissioner explained how the savings predicted for the closure of the dog unit would be realised.

- The Commissioner acknowledged that there was an error in the table showing domestic offences as a proportion of all crime and agreed to re-issue a corrected version.
- The Commissioner explained his proposals for rolling out work with schools on developing healthy relationships, but acknowledged that some push back from schools is being experienced because of a lack of academic validation.

(b) Finance update

The Panel considered report EPCP/033(b)/14 by the Treasurer to the Commissioner's Office which provided the Panel with:

- i) a financial summary of the provisional 2013/14 revenue and capital outturn;
- ii) an update on the progress made in allocating Community Safety Grant (CSG) monies for 2014/15; and
- iii) a commentary on the progress to date in delivering the 2014/15 financial plans.

The following points were made during the ensuing discussions.

- The Commissioner commented that improvements in the robustness of Police accounting were ongoing.
- The Treasurer explained that grants were being allocated and the accounts for 2013/14 were now being closed down.
- The Commissioner clarified the costings relating to the Athena project. He confirmed that arrangements were in place for monitoring contractor performance and that consideration was being given to looking at developing the scope of the project for the next stage.
- The Commissioner responded that the New Initiatives Fund had been reduced for 2014/15 because of the need for economies, although the net monies available within the wider community safety budget were the same as for 2013/14.
- The Commissioner acknowledged that there had been an increase in Police overtime and use of agency staff as a result of officer and staff reductions.
- The Treasurer confirmed that the figure relating to Audit fees was correct and that it covered the audits of both the Police Force and the Commissioner's Office.
- The Commissioner said he would be concerned if the numbers of officers went below 3,000. He welcomed the endorsement of the role that the Specials could play in the future.

9. Part-Night Lighting

The Panel considered report EPCP/034/14 by the Secretary to the Panel following on from a briefing presented to the Panel last December. Attached by way of background was a briefing prepared by the County Council. Also attached was a briefing paper from the Essex Police concerning progress in implementing the scheme, comparative police data and an overview of the LANTERNS project.

Councillor Butland declared a personal interest as a member of Essex County Council, the authority that had implemented the scheme. He also questioned whether the Panel had the authority to consider this matter, and proposed the Panel move to next business.

In response, the Secretary explained that the Panel could only consider the impact of part-night lighting on policing and crime from the point of view of the Commissioner.

Councillors Channer and Hedley both declared personal interests at this point, as they had both been involved with the implementation process.

In the light of Councillor Butland's concerns, the Chairman asked for a show of hands to determine whether the Panel wanted to proceed with this item. The majority of Panel members voted in favour.

The Commissioner reported that the lighting issue was raised at public meetings and there was a need to understand public concern. The roll out of the process had been made more rigorous and responsive to Police concerns. He indicated that there had been a quick response to turn lights back on when needed. The Panel noted that after a major incident lights were turned back on to enable the searches to take place and for public reassurance.

The Commissioner highlighted the national LANTERNS project, which aimed to determine whether reducing night-time street lighting had any impact on road accidents and crime.

The evidence as to the impact of part-night lighting is not conclusive. The Panel therefore agreed to re-visit the matter in a year's time.

10. Forward Look

The Panel considered report (EPCP/035/14) by the Secretary to the Panel concerning the planning of the Panel's business.

The Panel agreed the business proposed for the meetings currently scheduled, and the plans to arrange training sessions.

11. Update on On-going issues

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

- His decision to adopt the principles outlined in The Essex Compact, and actively to support and promote the voluntary sector. The Panel agreed that it would be helpful to have an overview of The Essex Compact at a future meeting.
- The summer demand on the police force had started early and has had a knock-on effect. The two recent major incidents in Colchester would put additional pressure on resources. The speculation in the national press regarding the motives behind the murders was unhelpful and distracted the police from their investigations. They needed to be allowed to do their work and to be measured in their response.

Councillor Young thanked the Commissioner and the Police for the way they have responded to the major incidents in Colchester.

12. Dates of Future Meetings

The Panel noted the dates of future meetings in 2014, scheduled for 14:30 on 18 September and 27 November.

Chairman
18 September 2014