

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ESSEX POLICE AND CRIME PANEL HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD, ON 26 NOVEMBER 2015

Present:

Councillor

Tony Hedley
Wendy Schmitt
Godfrey Isaacs
Bob Shepherd
Tim Young
Gary Waller
John Jowers
Tony Durcan
Stephen Savage
Jo McPherson
Lynda McWilliams
Gerard Rice
Jim Gordon
John Gili-Ross
Kay Odysseos

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
Tendring District Council
Thurrock Borough Council
Uttlesford District Council
Independent Member
Independent Member

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor

Graham Butland with
Wendy Schmitt as
his substitute
William Russell
Penny Channer with
Stephen Savage as
her substitute
Ian Gilbert
Jane Potheary with
Gerard Rice as her
substitute

Representing

Braintree District Council

Brentwood Borough Council
Maldon District Council

Southend Borough Council
Thurrock Borough Council

County Councillors Michael Mackrory and Stephen Robinson were also in attendance.

Councillor Peter Ruffles, the Hertfordshire County Council representative on the Hertfordshire Police and Crime Panel was welcomed as an observer to the meeting.

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 and supported by the following officers:
Susannah Hancock, Chief Executive
Charles Garbett, Treasurer

1. Minutes

Subject to the sentence of the seventh bullet of minute 8 (Review of Complaints Procedure) being amended to read “A suggestion by Councillor Shepherd that the Complaints Sub-Committee mediate discussions between the OPCC and the County Council was not agreed.”, the minutes of the meeting held on 29 October 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2. Declarations of Interest

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

3. Questions to the Chairman from Members of the Public

From Councillor Michael Mackrory

Councillor Michael Mackrory asked for comments on whether the deferred negotiations regarding police funding and the Government’s formula grant would lead to a favourable outcome for Essex Police in 2017/18, and on the impact of the Autumn Statement 2015 and the additional funding for trained firearms officers. The Chairman responded that these questions would be addressed as part of item 6(a) on the agenda.

4. Actions arising from the last meeting

The Panel received report EPCP/020/15 by the Secretary to the Panel highlighting the matters raised during the previous meeting that required further action and indicating the action taken.

The Chairman reported that the Revised Complaints Procedure was being finalised, but that extra time was needed in order to consider the implications of proposed revisions. In the light of the request, the Panel agreed that the Revised Complaints Procedure would be considered at the next scheduled meeting.

5. Reports from the Police and Crime Commissioner

(a) Finance Report and Budget Plans

The Panel received report EPCP/022/15 by the Treasurer to the Commissioner’s Office which provided the Panel with:

- i) The 2015/16 month 6 (April to September) revenue and capital payments and receipts compared with budget;

- ii) Progress in allocating PCC community safety funding for the year to date (April to October); and
- iii) Emerging budget issues that will inform early discussions on the 2016/17 budget and precept.

The following points were made during the ensuing discussion.

- As a result of the unexpected news in the Autumn Statement 2015 that police budgets would be protected in line with inflation, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable were reviewing the impact of this on the Essex Police budget.
- The Government would confirm its grant funding for Essex Police on 17 December 2015. Some funding may be “top-sliced” at a national level for specialist functions, such as increasing the number of trained firearms officers in the aftermath of the Paris terrorist attacks. The Commissioner anticipated that Essex Police would still be required to fill a £10-12m funding gap in 2015/16.
- The formal staff consultation with Unison around the proposals to reduce the number of PCSO posts in Essex was continuing. The Chief Constable anticipates that he would need to give affected staff a decision on the proposed cut backs by 7 December. It was not known at this stage whether a reduction in PCSO numbers would still go ahead. The Panel agreed that it would like details of the Chief Constable’s decision as soon as it was known.
- The Commissioner reported that he was disappointed with the lack of progress regarding the Government’s decision to defer its proposal to 2017/18 for changes to the formula grants. The Panel noted that Essex will continue to lobby for a fair and transparent funding formula.
- The Commissioner confirmed that the Estate changes would go ahead as planned.
- The Treasurer undertook to provide an updated table (refer page 14, Table 1) which would show the detailed reasons for the forecast 2015/16 budget overspend.
- The Panel expressed concern regarding the overspend arising out of the renewal of hardware and software licences, including the renewal of the licence agreement with SAP. The Panel was reassured that the situation had now been resolved and there was confidence that it would not reoccur in the future.
- In response to a question from John Gili-Ross regarding whether the Chief Constable employed staff with the appropriate level of skills for operating effectively in the future, the Commissioner explained that the Chief Constable was focused on professionalising Essex police staff.

- It would be helpful if the changing nature of crime and its complexity could be emphasised in future reports.

The Panel agreed that it would like details on the impact of the Autumn Statement and Government's funding grant as soon as the Chief Constable was in a position to outline his recommendations on the allocation of money.

(b) Annual Report

The Panel received report EPCP/023/15 by the Commissioner presenting his draft Annual Report for 2014/15.

The Panel welcomed the report for the clarity of the information and the format.

The following points were made during the ensuing discussion.

- With reference to Page 48, and the Targeting of Class A drug suppliers, the Panel indicated that with the perceived increase of crime gangs in Essex, consideration should be given to targeting all drug users.
- With reference to Page 53, the total number of crimes recorded in 2014/15 would be amended to read as 99,740 offences.
- With reference to Page 53, Public Satisfaction, the Panel suggested that more detail was required on who and how the statistical data was captured.
- A glossary of acronyms would be helpful.
- The Panel suggested that all information relating to 'hot' topics ie speeding, could be combined in one place to make the Report more accessible.

The Commissioner thanked the Panel Members for their comments and indicated that the Annual Report would be published online in December.

(c) Ethics and Integrity

The Panel received report EPCP/018/15 from the Assistant Director of Performance and Scrutiny providing an update on the work around ethics and integrity within Essex Police and the Crime Commissioner's Office.

The Members noted the report and the work currently underway in relation to the Police Code of Ethics.

The Panel indicated that it would welcome a copy of the results of the PEEL annual assessment once available.

6. Leadership, ethics and accountability: The Panel's draft response to the inquiry by the Committee on Standards in Public Life

The Panel considered report EPCP/021/15 from the Secretary to the Panel providing a draft response to be sent on behalf of the Panel by 29 November 2015.

The Panel agreed the proposed recommendations and draft response. The Secretary to the Panel confirmed that he would submit the Panel's response by the deadline.

7. Part-Night Lighting review

The Panel welcomed a briefing paper from Essex Police concerning part-night lighting which included comparative police data pre and post implementation relating to crime, and an overview of the national LANTERNS project.

The Commissioner highlighted the outcome from the LANTERNS project that there was no discernible evidence to suggest that reducing night-time street lighting had a negative impact on road accidents and crime. He also confirmed that the impact of part-night lighting would continue to be monitored.

Panel Members noted the briefing paper and indicated that this information would be helpful for them in their local district decision-making roles.

8. Forward Look

The Panel considered report EPCP/019/15 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 quarterly updates on the Transformation Programme, which would include details of the public contact programme, technology, and estates. A separate update would be provided on the Athena project.

The Commissioner acknowledged that the Members wished to receive his End of Term report at the scheduled Panel meeting on 18 February 2016.

9. Update on On-going Issues

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

- Further regional collaboration was underway to explore how Essex Police would cope in response to a major terrorist attack.
- The appointment of Matthew Horne as the new Deputy Chief Constable, Essex Police.
- The continuing search to acquire a new Essex Police Headquarters site.

- The awaited report and anticipated outcomes from HMIC on Essex Police performance in relation to safeguarding.
- The IPCC investigation into the way Essex Police handled a suspected rape inquiry against Lewis Daynes. Essex Police had been exonerated in how it had proceeded at the time.
- Essex having the highest murder rate in the UK since April 2015, and the surge over the past three years in crime associated with drugs and gangs.

The Panel agreed that it would be useful to receive 'heat' maps showing the spread of crime across the County.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The Panel noted that the next formal meeting would take place at 2.30 pm on Friday 29 January 2016, in Committee Room 1, County Hall, and that this would be preceded by a private pre-meeting starting at 1.45 pm.

Chairman
29 January 2016