

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ESSEX POLICE AND CRIME PANEL  
HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD, ON 12 DECEMBER 2013**

Present:

**Councillor**

Malcolm Buckley  
Wendy Schmitt  
Bob Shepherd  
Tim Young  
Gary Waller  
John Jowers  
Paul Sztumpf  
Penny Channer  
Jo McPherson  
Peter Halliday  
Angie Gaywood  
Robert Chambers  
Ann Haigh  
John Gili-Ross  
Kay Odysseos

**Representing**

Basildon Borough Council  
Braintree District 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  
Co-opted Member  
Independent Member  
Independent Member

**Apologies for Absence**

Graham Butland with Wendy Schmitt as his substitute	Braintree District Council
Chris Hossack	Brentwood Borough Council
Godfrey Isaacs	Castle Point Borough Council
Tony Cox	Southend Borough Council

The following Officers were in attendance throughout the meeting:

Colin Ismay, Governance Team Manager, Essex County Council, Secretary to the meeting

Jane Gardner, Head of Commissioning Growing Essex Communities, Essex County Council

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

Susannah Hancock, Executive Director

Charles Garbett, Treasurer; and

Chief Inspector Ed Wells.

**1. Minutes**

Subject in line 5 of the second paragraph of minute 3. (The Evolve Programme) to the substitution of the words "Central Government Grant" for the Words "total budget", the minutes of the meeting held on 1 August 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **2. Independent Member**

The Chairman on behalf of the Panel welcomed Mr John Gili-Ross to his first meeting in his role as an Independent Member.

## **3. Declarations of Interest**

Councillors Jowers and McPherson declared a personal interest as members of Safer Essex. Councillor McPherson also declared a personal interest as being employed by a recipient of a Community Safety grant. She also declared a personal interest in the Essex Community Foundation as an occasional member of the funding panel. Councillor Waller declared a personal interest as a Chairman of a Community Safety Partnership. Councillor Young declared a personal interest as Vice-Chairman of the Essex Probation Trust Management Board.

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

The Chairman responded to questions from Mr Ken Wickham and Maldon District Councillor Stephen Savage regarding the recent announcement by the Chief Constable concerning the closure of the Marine Unit as part of the proposals responding to the planned reduction in Central Government Funding. The rationale for this was questioned given that less than 18 months ago the Force was on high alert for terrorist attacks from the sea, there are on-going drugs and human trafficking problems, criminal damage and theft from the boating community and Essex has the longest county coastline in the UK.

The Chairman responded to the question on the basis that this was not purely an operational matter but had strategic implications. He pointed out that not all crime along the coastline was dealt with by the Marine Unit and that much was dealt with by inland resources and this would continue to be the case. There were also a number of other agencies involved with Marine issues which owned vessels and there will be opportunities for the Police to work with such partners as necessary.

## **5. The Police and Crime Commissioner One Year On**

The Police and Crime Commissioner reviewed his first year in Office. He started by thanking the Panel for its support and the effectiveness of the challenge provided to him.

In terms of his achievements he has produced a Police and Crime Plan; appointed a Chief Constable; set a budget; established a Performance and Scrutiny framework for the Police; established the challenge mechanisms for the Chief Constable and has provided challenge and support for the Force. In terms of performance crime is still reducing; the solved rate is increasing and the Chief Constable is focussed on solving crime. There has been an overall decrease in burglary. In terms of scrutinising the performance of the Chief Constable, the Commissioner is looking hard at a range of crimes including fraud; and he

absolutely sees a role for the HMIC in inspecting performance and supporting improvement. Quarterly challenge meetings have been established in public with the Commissioner holding the Chief Constable to account. With the cuts to the policing budget the future of Neighbourhood Policing continues to be seen as a matter of wider public concern.

In terms of public engagement, the Commissioner is facilitating contact between the people of Essex and the Police. The recent Community Safety conference hosted by the Commissioner's Office had an attendance of over 200 people. The Commissioner has established rural, business and victims of crime forums. He has taken a particular interest in reducing demand by a focus on crime prevention, community messaging and Rural Specials.

As an example of a scheme being funded by the Commissioner to reduce youth offending, the Commissioner showed a presentation on the Firebreak scheme run by The Essex Fire Service.

The Commissioner is passionate about ethics and integrity and professional standards for Police Officers. Issues relating to this are being driven throughout the Force. The Commissioner is looking to establish an Ethics and Integrity Committee from April 2014.

He continues to be passionate about supporting victims of crime and is developing a victims commissioning programme to ensure victims receive the support and information they need.

In terms of challenges he is concerned about education around risk awareness; mental health issues as they relate to criminal activity; road safety on which he is working with the County Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation; reducing the length of time roads are closed following road traffic accidents; victims commissioning; and the opportunities for restorative justice.

The Commissioner had reviewed the staffing needs of his Office and now has his new staffing structure in place. He paid tribute to those staff who were leaving.

The following points were made during the ensuing debate.

- In relation to the 1.6% reduction in crime, Councillor McPherson asked whether the Police encouraged the public to report crime and subsequently gave feedback on any outcome. The Commissioner responded that he made a point of encouraging the reporting of crime so that the Police are then obliged to record the crime.
- In response to a question from Councillor McPherson regarding the cost of the Firebreak scheme, the Deputy Commissioner explained that some pilots were being run and the opportunities for more co-operative working were being investigated.
- In response to a suggestion from Councillor Schmitt that the Commissioner's Office should consult with local partners about the best time to hold public meetings in the locality to benefit from their experience, the Commissioner

said he was happy to discuss this with partners to avoid reinventing the wheel and that for next year meetings will be held in the evening.

- In response to a question from Councillor Buckley about what is of concern to the Commissioner in relation to the budget, the Commissioner highlighted the loss of £6m from next year's grant, which would result in fewer police officers and staff.
- In response to a question from Councillor Young regarding the opportunities likely to flow from the Government's proposals for the Probation Service, the Commissioner cited the opportunity to work directly with offenders, particularly with those serving under 12-month sentences who currently get no supervision and to be closer to the decision-making. The Deputy Commissioner added that substantially more offenders will be supervised; less bureaucracy will mean that there will be a simpler tool for obtaining an assessment; and it will be easier to take someone off the street. The Chairman added that this is something the Panel could revisit once there has been some experience of the new arrangements in operation.
- In response to concerns raised by Councillor Gaywood regarding the greater emphasis on commissioning and the potential adverse impact on voluntary sector organisations bidding against the private sector which has greater experience and capacity for bidding for contracts, the Commissioner responded that the risks were recognised and would be taken into account. Susannah Hancock referred to the work being undertaken in relation to victim services commissioning and to ensuring that the current positive provision is not lost. The Commissioner referred to the use of local levers and to working with the voluntary organisations and the victims themselves. He referred to the need for all concerned to work with the voluntary sector on how to bid successfully for contracts and to build capacity to undertake such work. Councillor Sztumpf added that it would be necessary to look at organisational structure. Susannah added that the Commissioner's Office was looking at six months of capacity building. Ann Haigh emphasised the need to give due attention to those small organisations which lack the resources to give slick presentations. The Commissioner responded that he had met many groups and laid the foundations for a successful commissioning process.

## **6. Reports from the Police and Crime Commissioner: (a) Performance Update; (b) Finance Update**

The Panel considered report (EPCP/18(a)/13) by the Commissioner providing an update on progress in delivering the intentions behind the Police and Crime Plan. This included updated commentary on the key actions in hand or planned for each of the Areas of Focus and information to the end of October for the range of selected indicators – Appendix 1 to the report. Appendix 2 to the report showed headlines on drug seizures, possessions and drug-related arrests, in response to a previous request from the Panel for information on police activity in this area.

The relevance of indicators will continue to be kept under review and in particular as part of the refresh of the Police and Crime Plan for 2014/15.

The impacts from some of the projects that have been supported by the Community Safety Fund this year, as reported in the Mid Year Monitoring returns, were summarised in Appendix 3. For reference purposes attached as Appendix 4 was the Essex Police Performance Update, October 2013 and as Appendix 5 the Essex Police Performance Summary, April – October 2013.

The intention is to move to quarterly reporting and the performance information will be refreshed as follows:

<b>Panel meeting date</b>	<b>Performance for period</b>
20 February 2014	October – December 2013 (Q3)
19 June 2014	January – March 2014 (Q4) – Linked to Annual Report

The Panel was invited to consider the content of the report, identifying any aspects where further clarification or information was required. The Commissioner in introducing the report referred to the three new joint teams giving victims of domestic abuse a better service, with a focus on cases where children are at risk. The Commissioner is Chairman of the Strategy Board for the Whole Essex Partnership on Domestic Abuse. He sees the initiative as having real traction. However, there continue to be real challenges: there have been eight domestic abuse-related deaths since July which shows the scale of the issue. The following points were made during the ensuing debate.

- In relation to a point made by Councillor McPherson concerning a domestic violence pilot in a Rochford School, she undertook to e mail the Commissioner with information.
- Councillor Gaywood welcomed the use by Officers of body worn cameras to gather evidence in domestic abuse incidents. She believed that the Chief Constable should move ahead with prosecutions and that solved rates should increase. The Commissioner responded that he would be making sure that the Chief Constable addresses these issues but would not tell him how to do his job.
- In response to a question from Councillor Young regarding plans for strengthening neighbourhood policing and engaging with local communities, the Commissioner responded that these were challenges he had set the Chief Constable. A top priority for him was local solutions for responding to local challenges. There was no evidence that this would drive down crime but it was necessary to meet the other challenges. Councillor Schmitt endorsed the Commissioner's comment on the real impact of neighbourhood policing.
- In response to a question from Councillor Sztumpf regarding the possibility of drilling down into the statistics on Domestic Abuse to show different communities, the Commissioner explained that it was possible to analyse the information by types of offence but not by community. He agreed to come back to the Panel after doing some further work on the statistics.
- In relation to Domestic Abuse, Ann Haigh asked if the material arising from Domestic Homicide Reviews is reviewed by the Essex Police. The Commissioner responded that the Police put a lot of effort into understanding the learning from such reviews: however, capturing the interagency learning

was something that needs looking at further. Susannah Hancock added that this would be done at least annually and at the suggestion of Councillor Schmitt would also pick up information arising from the Courts.

- Councillor Halliday pointed out that the crime figures for Tendring are rising and asked if the Police target this. The Commissioner responded that Districts could use the information in discussions with the local Police Commander. The statistics should help sharpen the Police's focus on priority areas.

The Panel considered report EPCP/18(b)/13 by the Treasurer to the Commissioner providing:

- a financial summary of the force revenue and capital position at the end of month 7 (end of October)
- a brief update on the progress made in allocating Community Safety Grant monies;
- an early indication of financial pressures that would need to be taken into account in updating the Medium Term Financial Strategy to be presented to the next meeting of the Panel.

### **2013/14 Revenue Budget**

The month 7 forecast outturn was shown at Appendix A to the report. In summary, the total forecast expenditure was £271m, a net underspend of £3.3m against the budget.

Since the last financial update report to the Panel an earmarked reserve for the Estates Presentable Plan of £2.5m has been established. To create this reserve, budget provisions of £2m have been transferred from Police Officer pay and £0.5m from the Premises budgets underspends.

The main variations for month 7 are Police Officers pay and overtime, PCSO pay and Athena software.

#### ***Police Officers Pay***

Under-spending on police officers pay is now £2.5m following a budget transfer of £2.5m from police officers pay to premises for additional repairs and maintenance.

At the beginning of October the Police Officer strength was 3,230 full time equivalents (FTEs). The original budget was based on 3,338 FTEs at 1 April 2013 and a Reform savings target to be deducted from the pay budgets of £3.045m. The forecast number of police officers for the end of this financial year is 3,233.

The forecast underspend assumes that there will be no change in recruitment plans.

#### ***Police Officer Overtime***

Police Officer overtime is forecast to overspend by £0.4m.

### ***PCSO's***

PCSO pay is forecast to underspend by £1.5m due to unfilled vacancies. Against an establishment of 362 FTEs the strength at the beginning of October was 311.

### ***Athena Software***

Work on the Athena programme is still in the critical phase. The latest forecast indicates an over spend of £0.9m for 2013/14 but this position is still subject to change and the Panel will be updated in due course.

### ***Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC)***

The under spend for the OPCC reported to the last meeting of £198k on the budget of £1.15m along with the underpinning assumptions regarding the implementation of the new structure remain unchanged.

### ***Community Safety Funds***

The Month 7 forecast outturn assumes that community safety funds will be fully utilised.

The latest position shows that £269,000 from the budget of £2.8m is currently uncommitted. There have, however, been discussions with the Essex Community Foundation (ECF) with a view to placing some of the remaining funds into an endowment fund managed by ECF. This approach would facilitate the building up of a longer term approach to funding community safety and crime reduction programmes.

An update on any proposed use of ECF facilities will be provided to the next meeting.

### ***Future Commissioning of Victims' Services***

The Minister of State for Policing, Criminal Justice and Victims has announced grant funding totalling £640,000 that would be provided to the Commissioner in preparation for commissioning services for victims of crime (including restorative justice services) starting October 2014.

These grant monies for preparation and setting up arrangements are intended to be spent by September 2014 to enable the Commissioner:

- i) to build the capacity and capability of potential providers of services for victims (including potential providers of restorative justice services) from the Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector;
- ii) to commission restorative justice services if capacity and capability are sufficient in relation to these services;

- iii) to prepare for local commissioning.

The grant monies will arrive during 2013/14 but as it is late in the year there will be some year-end flexibility to carry forward unspent monies into 2014/15. Work is now underway with partners to develop a commissioning strategy for both victims' services and restorative justice.

### **Innovation Fund**

The Government has established a national Police Innovation Fund of £50m per year from 2013/14. This is designed to support collaborative initiatives that enable more efficient, effective and modern policing, for example through improved ICT and digital working.

In addition, there is a Precursor fund of £20m available for 2013/14. The Commissioner is in the process of submitting bids for this fund and for the on-going funds available.

### **2013/14 Capital Programme**

Forecast capital expenditure has further reduced by £1.5m from £7.8m to £6.3m following a review of the spending profile for a number of projects. Much of the slippage in payments is due to fall into 2014/15.

The current capital reserves are outlined below:

	£m
Opening balance 1 April 2013	15.3
Capital income in year	2.8
Capital expenditure in year	(6.3)
Closing balance 31 March 2014	11.8

Capital income constitutes home office grant (£2.3m) and capital receipts (£0.5m). Only one house has been sold during the year to date (£0.22m) but there is the possibility of police house capital receipts during the current financial year. The forecast of £0.5m has therefore been set at a prudent level.

Progress has been made on the formulation of a new estates strategy, IT strategy and fleet strategy. These are the three driving strategies for the capital programme. Although at an early stage the planned approach is to present the latest thinking at the budget and precept meeting of the Panel on 29 January in order to inform the schemes for the new capital programme.

### **Reserves**

All reserves were highlighted in Appendix B to the report. This showed total forecast reserves of £36.1m at 31 March 2014, however due to the past use of cash in lieu of borrowing, the cash backed reserves amounted to £27m.



The level of forecast general reserves, at £19.7m, is used to provide essential working capital in order to avoid expensive short term borrowing and also to provide a contingency for unexpected operational demands. Moreover, the reserves have been building up as a result of current under spending and this will enable the impact of financial pressures to be mitigated moving forward.

### **Financial Pressures for the Medium-Term Financial Strategy**

Since the Chancellor of the Exchequer's announcement of the Spending Round 2013 (SR2013) in June, which set out the public spending totals for 2014/15 and 2015/16, work has focussed on the consequences for Essex Police. Central Government funding for Police is expected to reduce by 5.1% in real terms for 2014/15 and by a further 4.9% in 2015/16.

More recent indications from Government suggest that the provisional grant settlement figures for individual forces being announced later this month will be for 2014/15 only and this therefore increases uncertainty for financial planning.

Based on latest available figures the broad consequences are that over the next three years there is likely to be a reduction of around £16m in core Government grant funding and service pressures of at least £20m over the same period.

Further analysis of the medium-term figures highlights an estimated shortfall of £8m for 2014/15 that will need to be immediately addressed both in the context of next month's budget and precept decision but also in helping to address inevitable budget difficulties over the medium term.

The backdrop for Government grant and precept levels was highlighted in Appendix C to the report. This showed that for 2013/14 Essex Police revenue resources received from Government Grant were average but that resources from the setting of the precept were very low. Indeed, there are only three other shire forces with a 2013/14 precept lower than Essex. The Government is considering the level at which an increase in precept is deemed to be excessive and an announcement is expected later this month.

### **Evolve programme update**

The Chief Constable has established a change programme of work, titled EVOLVE to inform the managed reduction in budgets whilst mitigating the impact on the service. The scale of reductions over several years is extremely challenging and more so in the light of needing to invest in services that enable policing services and partnership working to reduce crime and are sustainable for the future. An outline of the work of the EVOLVE programme was shown in Appendix D to the report.

At the last meeting the Panel requested further information on the new arrangements in place for shared funding of PCSOs. The EVOLVE team is managing this aspect and further information will be made available as the EVOLVE programme progresses.

The context for preparing for future budget reductions in order to ensure that the most efficient and effective services are maintained is the Police and Crime Plan. The areas of focus contained within the Plan have provided practical reference points for guiding the emphasis on policing services and the direction of support for community initiatives.

In introducing the report the Commissioner made the point that the Police are on target to meet the savings. A hold has been put on some recruitment but the Police are still recruiting some new officers. The Commissioner was disappointed by the under spend against the capital programme particularly as the Police Estate is in need of attention. This work is now underway. In relation to the financial pressures facing the Police the Commissioner highlighted the £20m cost pressures and the loss of funding of £16m.

### **Athena**

In relation to the Athena Software project the Commissioner reported that he is Chairman of the Joint Management Board for the project. The project should go live early next year. There are tight contractual restraints that apply and the project is being tightly managed.

The following points were made during the ensuing debate.

- The Chairman referred to the possibility of placing an element of the funding with the Essex Community Foundation and that this was a matter for decision by the Commissioner. The Commissioner responded that he was still considering the decision but saw its potential for developing resilience for the future and demonstrating the importance of the voluntary sector.
- In relation to points made by John Gili-Ross about the Athena Software project, Charles Garbett explained that it was not possible at present to discuss these matters because of contractual restrictions but it should be possible to address them in the new year.
- In relation to the Evolve Programme Councillor Young commented that the Commissioner's decision to withdraw from payment to the districts of the Local Tax Support was in his view short-sighted and a mistake and would alienate the district councils. He asked the Commissioner to reconsider the decision. The Commissioner responded that he had agreed to meet with district representatives to discuss the matter. In his view the £1m involved should be spent on policing rather than supporting the collection of council tax. The decision had been taken by the Commissioner but had not been communicated well. It would be his intention to spend an equivalent sum in each district on policing.
- Councillor Gaywood requested further information in relation to funding PCSOs. The Commissioner responded that the Chief Constable had written out to local authorities on the subject and was working out a new base-line allocation whereby need will follow demand. There will still be the opportunity for local authorities to fund additions. Referring to the last bullet point on page 8 of the minutes of the last meeting the Commissioner clarified that he had not intended to say that "there will be one PCSO per ward". Charles

Garbett explained that in terms of planning for PCSOs, the figures would not be available until after local authority budgets are set.

## **7. Part-Night Lighting**

The Panel deferred consideration of report (EPCP/19/13) by the Secretary to the Panel until there is more experience of the impact of part-night lighting.

## **8. Training**

The Panel considered a report (EPCP/020/13) by the Secretary to the Panel setting out proposals for a training session for Panel members.

### **Resolved:**

That the proposals for a joint training session as set out in report EPCP/020/13 be agreed.

## **9. Forward Look**

The Panel considered a report (EPCP/021/13) 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 subject to any additions made during the meeting.

The Panel also agreed additional dates for 18 September and 27 November at 2.30 pm.

## **10. The Police and Crime Commissioner's Conference**

There was general agreement that the Conference had been a success.

## **11. The Government Response to the Home Affairs Select Committee Report, Police and Crime Commissioners: Power to remove Chief Constables**

The Panel received a report (EPCP/022/13) by the Secretary to the Panel concerning a letter dated 3 December from the Minister of State for Policing and Criminal Justice in response to a Statement made by the Home Affairs Select Committee regarding the power of a police and crime commissioner to remove a chief constable.

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

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

- The Commissioner paid tribute to PC Ian Dibell who had posthumously been awarded the George Medal for gallantry for his actions on the day he lost his life tackling a gunman in Clacton. He is the first police officer in the country

to receive the award in 21 years and the first ever in Essex. The Panel endorsed the Commissioner's comments.

- The Chairman paid tribute to the Police for their role in responding to the Tidal Surge during the crucial 24-hour period on December 5-6. The Commissioner commented that he had been with the Gold Commander and witnessed every resource being called up. Councillor Young added that tribute was due to all those who had been concerned in responding to the incident.

Chairman  
29 January 2014