

Minutes of the meeting of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel, held in Committee Room 1 County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH on Thursday, 07 December 2017

Present:

Wendy Schmitt	Braintree District Council
Colin Riley	Castle Point Borough Council
Bob Shepherd	Chelmsford City Council
John Jowers	Essex County Council (Chairman)
Penny Channer	Maldon District Council
Mike Webb	Rochford District Council
Ann Holland	Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
Lynda McWilliams	Tendring District Council
John Gili-Ross	Independent Member (via telephone link)

1 Apologies for Absence and Notices of Substitution

Kerry Smith	Basildon Borough Council
Godfrey Isaacs with	
Colin Riley as his substitute	Castle Point Borough Council
Mike Lilley	Colchester Borough Council
Sam Kane	Epping Forest District Council
Tony Durcan	Harlow District Council
Joycelyn Redsell	Thurrock Council
Kay Odysseos	Independent Member

2 Declarations of Interest

There were declarations of interest from:

Councillor Channer as a former member of the Essex Fire Authority and being the Cabinet Member Deputy at Essex County Council for Children and Families.

Councillor Holland due to her son being a police officer.

Councillor Jowers as a former member of the Essex Fire Authority.

Councillor McWilliams due to her son being a police officer.

Councillor Riley due to his son being a fire officer.

Councillor Schmitt as a former member of the Essex Fire Authority.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

 J. Jowers 22.1.2018

- 4 **Questions to the Chairman from Members of the Public**
There were none.

5 **Essex Police: Demand Review**

The Chief Constable of Essex, Stephen Kavanagh was in attendance for this item. In introduction Mr Kavanagh paid tribute to all police officers in the county.

Since 2010 £77m of savings have been achieved. With these efficiencies and from the perspective of being the lowest funded force in the country Essex Police are still in a very strong position with real transformation on how it operates as a force. In responding to new crimes and increasing levels of demand, police officers have been deployed to address these challenges and in order to do this, some have been taken away from localities; PCSOs have been reduced from 400 to 100 – The value for money aspect of this is being explored with HMICFRS as monies have been invested back into the front-line at a rate greater than that of any other force in the country. Essex Police remains one of the most efficient forces in the country accordingly to HMICFRS VFM indicators. Essex Police is judged as good in relation to recent PEEL inspection judgements. The Essex Police back office also operates very efficiently. There is a full recruitment of officers until mid-2018. Sustainability conversations are taking place with the Commissioner. Social media has been used to good effect in recruitment, including for the special constabulary. Until the budgetary statement is forthcoming further recruitment beyond the mid-point of 2018 is under review. With regard to the graduate scheme, Mr Kavanagh, explained that 10 young people who recently completed university had six weeks of full police training and have been placed into local districts looking at local problems and problem-solving. It is hoped that a further 10 can be recruited next year as well as retaining the current intake.

Demand places significant challenges on the force. Mr Kavanagh informed the Panel that there are officers who have concerns that they are unable to provide the responses they would like to, in terms of crime prevention, and the force has had to become increasingly responsive. However, in terms of crime prevention good work is still taking place around gang culture from London infiltrating into the county. The force delivers above what could be expected given its level of funding as benchmarked by PA Consulting. Essex Police is an ambitious force but also needs to be an effective leader. The PA Consulting analysis showed that Kent Police has 400 more officers than Essex and the PA analysis showed that Essex Police would need at least an additional 288 officers to reflect demand pressures in relation to public protection issues. Essex is always going to be a lean, yet cost-efficient, police force and to get to the national average would need over an additional 900 officers in local policing.

Mr Kavanagh stated he is making sure that Essex maintains its position on tackling digital crime and that there is a pilot scheme being tested in Essex,



at present, which has the potential to be a model for forces across the country. The Essex force was the first to launch Athena and are receiving national awards for digital which are a credit to Gareth Nicholson of Essex Police Communications. The Chief Constable is the national lead on the Crystallise digital project which enables more effective investigation. The project will be at the heart of the future national operating model and is currently being piloted in the north of the county. Cloud based and mobile technologies are being introduced to good effect replacing archaic computers. Mr Kavanagh committed to providing Councillor Schmitt with a briefing on all digital pilot schemes.

With regard to the Mental Health and wellbeing of officers and staff, Mr Kavanagh assured the Panel that officers receive all the support they need and Occupational Health referrals are now dealt with, largely, within the same week rather than the three months they were taking previously. There is also mindfulness training available. With regard to the public, Mental Health triage teams work from 6 a.m. until 2 a.m. with availability of a Mental Health practitioner to provide appropriate care and advice – this has vastly reduced the number of citizens going into custody with mental health issues and improved dignity. Mr Kavanagh committed to providing Councillor McWilliams with a mental health briefing on a pilot scheme based in Tendring

There has been a sustained change in how crime in the county takes place – and, on analysis, there is an increase in crime harm factors. There is a higher demand with fewer officers; and there is concern over 999 response times and the 101 system, although this has now started to show significant improvement. The force is currently looking at the outcomes of changes that have been made and the appropriateness of responses in terms of crime committed. The Active Citizen programme is going very well with over 100 citizens assisting with crime prevention advice, raising awareness, and speedwatch.

Any additional funding for the police in Essex would be invested into community policing, Mr Kavanagh stated.

The Chairman of the Panel thanked Mr Kavanagh for the update and suggested he be invited to attend the Panel more often in the future; and complimented the Essex Police force for its hard work and dedication to the people of the county.

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2018/19 Budget Scene Setting

Roger Hirst, Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner; Charles Garbett, Treasurer, OPFCC; and Susannah Hancock, Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer, OPFCC were in attendance for this item. The Commissioner provided an update on the progress on the Essex Police and the Fire and Rescue Services' budgets for 2018/19.

The Commissioner informed the Panel the Police service has a strong evidential base for what is needed for policing delivery over the next few



years. The Association of Police and Crime Commissioner's has submitted a funding letter to the Home Office. The funding for police forces across the country will be known prior to Christmas. National police funding is inflation protected, unlike local policing. Pressures on policing mean that the expansion of the council tax base should be agreed by central government to enable forces to be modernised.

Current levels of funding have meant that crime prevention measures are affected with resource diverted into reactive policing. The Chief Constable has been given assurances that the Commissioner is fully with him on delivering the type of policing the county needs. An increase in the number of officers this year does have implications for next, however, unless there is a funding increase, particularly as Essex is the most tightly funded police force in England and Wales, which now has a good rating across the board from HMICFRS for which the Commissioner thanked the Chief Constable. There has been an ongoing programme of improving efficiency in the force.

During this financial year the force has received a high level of capital receipts, in the region of £24m, from the disposal of redundant premises. This has been used to modernise other premises so they are fit-for-purpose and invest into modern technologies, such as £1.4m to be spent on apps on police mobile telephones.

The 2018/19 precept is going to have to be increased, but the question remains by how much? The cap should be lifted to have a more material increase than £5 per resident. Indeed, £50 per resident would enable Essex Police to improve the service to residents greatly, but this could be a difficult and controversial process.

In contrast the Essex Fire and Rescue Service are in a much more stable financial position, but are still delivering efficiencies. Necessary savings up to 2020 providing the precept by 2% which is likely to be the proposition to the Panel in the new year.

The following points were made during the ensuing discussion:

- Any precept referendum will be very expensive to administer and have to be a simple Yes or No response to raising council tax; therefore, the ideal situation would be for the Home Office and Treasury to remove the current cap
- The feedback from the precept survey was that two-thirds of residents would be willing to pay extra
- There will be two separate police and fire precepts and budgets

The proposed precepts will be presented to the January meeting of the Panel.

7

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service: Culture change following the Lucas review

The Commissioner stated the 240 pages in the agenda for this item reflected the complexities. The Lucas Review was commissioned by the



former Essex Fire Authority and undertaken by Irene Lucas. It was very overt in the report that the culture of the Essex Fire and Rescue Service needed significant change. Whilst the service was still effective for the public there were major internal issues within its culture that needed to be addressed. The current Chief Fire Officer, Adam Eckley, who was in attendance, was commended by the Commissioner.

The Commissioner stated the 240 pages of the report were important to enable the Panel to have a good understanding of the problems and the way cultural change needs to be achieved. Conduct and disciplinary procedures are being worked on presently and this is important work for the Panel to understand.

The Commissioner stated he had visited a large number of fire stations and watches and the feedback is that the environment is still unnecessarily stressful, but is improving and officers now feel more empowered to say that. The fire officers need to be aware they have the complete support of all they are going to work with and not to be overly challenging with each other.

The recruitment of a new Chief Fire Officer has been an open, independent, transparent and competitive process which had a good level of response. It was open to both fire and non-fire candidates. An interview panel made up of the Commissioner, the Chief Executive of Thurrock Council; the Chairman of Safer Essex; a Cabinet Member of a district council; a Home Official who is also a former experienced Chief Fire Officer, and the Chief Exec of the OPFCC have been appointed and have shortlisted down to the final four candidates. All candidates had very strong CV's – some with current or prior fire officer experience. The interviews are to take place week commencing 11 December and will include panel interview, media mock-up exercise, drafting a staff communication, psychometric testing and meeting the heads of the other emergency services in the county. It is hoped there will be an appointment during week commencing 18 December. It is anticipated that there will be a confirmation hearing for the preferred candidate at the Jan panel meeting.

It was agreed, following a proposal by the Commissioner, that the Panel's Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee works through the detail of the Lucas Review and other subsequent reports. This work would start at the Sub-Committee's next meeting in February/March 2018.

8

Feedback report from the PFCC Precept Public Survey

The Commissioner was joined by Darren Horsman, Assistant Director Comms OPFCC for this item.

There has previously been anecdotal and narrative evidence that residents wish to see more policing in their localities and are willing to pay for it. The survey undertaken included a few simple questions: would you like to see the 2% precept cap lifted? Would you wish to have more policing and would you be willing to pay for it and by how much from £5 per week, up to £75 per week. There was a free text box to enable responders to make



additional comments.

It was clear from responses that residents do wish to see more local visible neighbourhood policing. Responses indicate 66% would be prepared to pay for more policing; 65% would wish to see the 2% cap lifted, with 75% indicating they would pay £10 or more; with 16% indicating they would pay £5 extra.

Overall, it was an encouraging response with over 5,000 replying to the survey within a fortnight. The survey has been used to encourage the Policing Minister to lift the 2% cap. The majority of PCCs are supportive of raising the cap.

Essex MPs have been addressed by the Commissioner at Westminster and have also signed a letter to the Policing Minister supporting the initiative.

The Commissioner was thanked for his overview of the survey by the Chairman of the Panel.

- 9 The Police and Crime Commissioner Decision Report**
The decisions on the report were noted.
- 10 The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner to update the Panel on On-going issues**
The on-going issues had been dealt with under other agenda items.
- 11 PCC Annual Report 2016-2017**
The report EPCP/29/17 was approved by the Panel.
- 12 Minutes of the 9th November meeting of the Ethics and Integrity Sub Committee**
The Chairman of the Panel provided a verbal report to accompany the minutes of the above meeting, which were noted.
- 13 Forward Look**
The Panel's Forward Look was noted.
- 14 Date of Next Meeting**
The next meeting will now be on **Monday, 22 January 2018 at 2.00 p.m.**, in **Committee Room 1, County Hall**. The change of date was noted. It was confirmed the Panel would meet at Kelvedon Park at future meetings in 2018.

With no urgent business or exempt urgent business the meeting closed at 3.59 p.m.

J. H. Jones 22.1.2018

Chairman