

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ESSEX POLICE AND CRIME PANEL HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD, ON 26 MARCH 2013

Present:

Councillor

Malcolm Buckley
Graham Butland
Chris Hossack
Jeffrey Stanley
Bob Shepherd
Tim Young
Mary Sartin
John Jowers
Paul Sztumpf
Jo McPherson
Tony Cox
Peter Halliday
Gerard Rice
Robert Chambers
Ann Haigh
Councillor Angie
Gaywood was also
in attendance

Representing

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

Apologies for Absence

Penny Channer Maldon District Council

The following Officers were in attendance throughout the meeting:

Gill Butterworth, Senior Policy and Strategy Officer, Strategic Services
Colin Ismay, Governance Team Manager, Essex County Council, Secretary to
the meeting
Paul Warren, Chief Executive, Rochford District Council

The Chairman welcomed Tony Cox to his first meeting of the Panel.

1. Questions

With the agreement of the Chairman, Councillor Gaywood asked the following questions and received the replies indicated:

- In light of the Jimmy Saville child abuse scandal and Operation YewTree, does the Police and Crime Commissioner feel that the Crime Plan gives significant weight to supporting not only child victims of sexual abuse but also those that are now adults?

Reply

The Commissioner emphasised his commitment to dealing with Domestic Abuse. He had strong encouragement to include sexual abuse in the Plan but it

was too early for him to form a view on the scale of the risk in Essex. In the end he has not included crime types in the Plan. Provision for victim support is included. In terms of child sexual abuse, the Commissioner wrote to the three Directors of Children's Services and has met with them to discuss organised child abuse. He supports a plan to facilitate a meeting with the Directors and the Police Intelligence Unit to explore whether the Police have done and are doing all that they can. So like many other significant issues it is not specifically mentioned in the Plan.

- Can the Police and Crime Commissioner give assurances that the Unitary Authorities' funding for Community Safety Partnerships will be directly funded for the next year and that they will not have to bid as part of the wider Essex Safer Partnership?

Reply

The Commissioner confirmed that for this year there would be no need to bid for funds as part of Safer Essex. Councils have been asked to confirm what monies they want and how they will be spent in order to be able to map out how the money is spent. The Chairman added that there was a need to have a debate on the Terms of Reference of Safer Essex and its role in representing wider Essex. Tony Cox commented that existing work programmes could be used to meet the Commissioner's information needs. The Commissioner's Acting Chief Executive commented that all 14 Councils had responded positively and only 6 needed further clarification. Confirmation of funding would be confirmed in a few days.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 February 2013 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman:

3. Declarations of Interest

The following members declared a personal interest as a member of Safer Essex or a local Crime and Safety Partnership:

Councillors Malcolm Buckley; Tony Cox; Chris Hossack; Angie Gaywood; Jo McPherson; Gerard Rice; and Tim Young.

It was agreed that the Secretary would write to members to ascertain those interests that need to be recorded as a matter of routine.

4. A Guide to Scrutiny and the Draft Work Programme

The Panel considered report EPCP/04/13 by the Secretary to the Panel concerning guidance on how the Panel might develop its Scrutiny role and arising out of that the beginnings of a draft work programme for the Panel.

The Guidance was that produced by the Local Government Association and the Centre for Public Scrutiny. It set down how the Panel might go beyond the set piece functions laid down by legislation to scrutinise how the Commissioner exercises his statutory function of providing strategic direction in local policing. The Guidance suggested that additional work complementing the set piece events is necessary to help the Panel support the work of the Commissioner. The Panel should be acting as a critical friend, a supportive but independent voice seeking to investigate the Commissioner in the interests of recommending changes and improvements.

The Panel considered the Guidance and the outline of its work programme in relation to how it wants to carry out its role and what information it might request from the Commissioner on a regular basis to achieve this.

The following points were made during the ensuing debate:

- More should be done to publicise the Panel:
 - by the Commissioner at his public meetings;
 - on the Commissioner's website;
 - establishing a web presence on the County Council's website
 - working with the County Council's Press Office to generate interest in meetings.
- Opinion was divided on whether there was any advantage in moving meetings around the County or staying in Chelmsford but using venues other than County Hall.
- A programme should be developed with a proportion of meetings in the evening.
- There should be an overarching report on how policing is being delivered to give the Panel a strategic overview of policing in Essex.
- Specific issues should be selected from the Policing Plan for further consideration by getting to understand the baselines.
- "Legal Highs" was suggested as a topic for further consideration, drawing the different strands together and helping the Commissioner in dealing with them.
- The Panel needed to be careful in not treading on operational matters.
- There was tension in the role of applying scrutiny without going into operational matters.
- The Panel should concentrate on its statutory role receiving regular updates on the budget and the policing plan.
- The Commissioner may want to suggest items for the Panel to consider.
- There might be three types of Panel meeting:
 - dealing with the set piece events;
 - taking evidence from others (at which the Commissioner would not need to be present;
 - seminar-type sessions for expanding the Panel's own understanding of matters;
- The Panel should maintain links with Overview and Scrutiny and LSPs to draw on other people's experience.
- It is not possible to fulfil the Panel's role by only concentrating on the statutory role.

- The Panel should employ Task and Finish Groups where necessary.
- It was suggested that there be a sub-committee to look at finance and follow the precept throughout the year.
- The Panel should concentrate on the key drivers – the budget and delivering the Police and Crime Plan
- The Panel should monitor performance information and targets against delivering the Police and Crime Plan provided by the Commissioner.
- The Commissioner acknowledged that with regard to the performance framework this was still a gap but something should be in place for the first quarter.
- The Panel should focus on holding the Commissioner to account, not doing his job for him.

5. Update on the Commissioner's Process for Commissioning Community Safety and Crime Reduction Initiatives

The Panel received an update from the Commissioner on the process for commissioning community safety and crime reduction initiatives.

He had clarified to all Community Safety Partnerships that they would receive funding for this year. Information on projects had been requested not to put people through hoops to access the money but to enable the Commissioner to get a better understanding of how the money is used. Approvals were in hand.

Bids were also being invited for further funds. A bidding process was being designed, possibly using Safer Essex to help with evaluation. The process will close by the second week in June and the Commissioner will report back to the Panel.

6. Handling Complaints about the Police and Crime Commissioner and his Deputy

The Panel considered a report by the Secretary to the Panel outlining proposals for handling complaints against the Commissioner and his Deputy.

The Panel agreed that further discussions be held between the Panel's secretary and the Commissioner's Office and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman be authorised to confirm the proposals.

7. Review of Confirmatory Hearing Procedure

The Panel considered a report by the Secretary reviewing the process for conducting Confirmatory Hearings based on the process used for the Hearing for the Chief Constable.

The Panel confirmed the process as the basis for conducting future Hearings including adjourning and then inviting everyone back in order to hear the decision on the same day.

8. Update on On-going Issues

The Commissioner provided the Panel with a brief update regarding on-going issues he wished to bring to its attention.

Chairman
1 August 2013