

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ESSEX POLICE AND CRIME PANEL
HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD, ON 20 FEBRUARY 2014**

Present:

Councillor

Malcolm Buckley
Graham Butland
Godfrey Isaacs
Bob Shepherd
Tim Young
Gary Waller
John Jowers
Mike Danvers
Penny Channer
Jo McPherson
Lynda McWilliams
Angie Gaywood
Robert Chambers
John Gili-Ross
Kay Odysseos

Representing

Basildon Borough Council (Vice-Chairman)
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

Chris Hossack	Brentwood Borough Council
Tony Cox	Southend Borough Council
Paul Sztumpf with Mike Danvers as his substitute	Harlow District Council
Mick Page with Lynda McWilliams as his substitute	Tendring District Council
Ann Haigh	Co-opted Member

The following Officers were in attendance throughout the meeting:

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

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

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2. Membership

The Secretary to the Panel reported that Councillor Mick Page had replaced Councillor Paul Honeywood as the representative for Tendring District Council. His substitute remains Councillor Lynda McWilliams.

3. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Jowers and McPherson declared a personal interest as members of Safer Essex. Councillors Isaacs, McWilliams and Waller declared a personal interest as members of Safer Essex and Chairman of the local Community Safety Partnership. Councillor McPherson also declared a personal interest as being employed by a recipient of a Police and Crime Commissioner's New Initiative Fund grant.

4. Actions arising from the last meeting

The Panel received report EPCP/026/13 by the Secretary to the Panel highlighting the matters raised during the previous meeting that required further action and indicating the action taken.

Councillor Chambers thanked the Commissioner for the note on the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners attached to the report but said this did not address the point he was interested in which was more to do with the workings of the Association. In response the Commissioner explained that it had not been an easy year for the Association as all the Commissioners came from different backgrounds and all were finding their way in the role. The Association is beginning to find a voice on national issues. It meets regularly with the Home Secretary and the Policing Minister. It has taken time for the Association to find its collective voice. The Commissioners meet in political groupings and in Regional networks.

The Commissioner leads nationally on ICT matters on behalf of all Commissioners with support from the Association.

He meets regularly with Ann Barnes, his opposite number from Kent.

Councillor Chambers responded that his reason for raising the matter was to make the point that if the Commissioners were able to work together they would achieve an influential voice within Central Government.

The Chairman, picking up on the idea of the potential benefits of networking suggested it would be worth finding out what other Panels are doing locally and looking to establish a loose association. The Panel agreed this idea was worth pursuing.

5. Revised Proposed Police Precept for 2014/15

The Panel considered report (EPCP/027/14) by the Secretary to the Panel setting out the latest position with regard to the Commissioner's proposed precept.

The Chairman introduced the item and took advice from the Treasurer to the Commissioner on the Panel's position. The Treasurer's view was that as the Panel had decided not to veto the original proposal but had asked the Commissioner to come back if a cap was imposed, the Regulations did not provide for the Panel to exercise any subsequent veto.

The Commissioner had presented his original proposals to the Panel's last meeting. At that meeting the Panel decided that it was satisfied with the proposed increase in the precept of 3.5% on the understanding that the Secretary of State did not apply a cap to the level of increase in Police Precepts. In the event that the budget proposals were impacted by the subsequent application of such a cap the Panel agreed that the Commissioner should report back to a further meeting to present his revised proposals.

On 5 February the Secretary of State for the Department for Communities and Local Government set out the principles which would enable the Commissioner to determine whether a particular precept increase would be excessive. If excessive, a referendum must be held in relation to that amount. The principles set by the Secretary of State were a precept increase of 2% or more would be deemed excessive. The Commissioner did not intend to put the precept increase to a referendum because of the cost involved and so he had revised his proposals which were attached to the report.

The Commissioner was proposing a precept increase just below the trigger point for a referendum. This equates to an increase of 1.97% in order to ensure that a referendum being invoked through 'rounding upwards' is avoided and also that the resultant police element of the council tax for a Band D property, at £144.27, is divisible by 9 in order to facilitate its implementation by billing authorities.

As a direct consequence of moving from a precept increase of 3.5% to 1.97% the total Evolve and Reform activity savings required in 2014/15 as shown in Appendix A to his report increased by £1.2m from £9.9m to £11.1m.

The following changes had been made to the revised budget summary with an update to the council tax precept income and collection fund surplus provided at the meeting:

- i) A reduction in the council tax precept income from £85,809k to £84,545k arising from the reduction in the proposed precept from 3.5% to 1.97%.
- ii) An increase in the savings required of £1.2m.
- iii) An increase in the collection fund surplus of £243k from £821k to £1,064k reflecting the buoyancy of council tax collection.

- iv) An increase in the budgeted cost of supporting billing authorities through the council tax sharing agreement by £55k from £318k to £373k, again reflecting the increased performance of council tax collection.

The following points were made during the ensuing discussion.

- Councillor Buckley remained opposed to increasing the precept.
- Councillor Danvers supported the Commissioner's revised proposals.
- Councillor Young felt that the Panel should be lobbying Central Government for the decision on the precept to be made locally without the imposition of caps by Central Government. He asked for an indication of what saving the extra money would mean in practice. The Commissioner responded that he had made his views known to Ministers in the Home Office and the Department for Communities and Local Government. He said his proposals needed to be viewed against a backdrop of a reduction in Central Government grant of £8.4m. His proposals are therefore intended to reduce the impact of the budget cuts. The latest proposals require the Chief Constable to achieve additional savings of £1.15m through the Evolve programme. It will be up to the Chief Constable to decide how to make those savings. The Chairman indicated that the Panel would expect to see a summary of the savings to be achieved by the Chief Constable at a future meeting.
- Councillor Butland reiterated his concerns expressed at the last meeting, namely that he believed the decision to increase the precept showed a lack of political acumen; that the Commissioner was showing the potential to be a serial increaser of taxation; that the impact of the budget on policing outcomes is not explicit. He considered that the percentage budget savings were at the lower end of those being faced by other local authorities which were coping and still delivering high quality services without raising taxes; the Commissioner by increasing the precept stood out against this trend.
- Councillor Chambers claimed that in November the Commissioner had said that the budget cuts will amount to a cut in the number of police officers. He wanted to know if there will be a loss of police officers. The Commissioner responded that the assumption had always been that there would be a loss of officers. It was down to the Chief Constable to make the decisions in terms of the Evolve programme. The Commissioner would want to see officer numbers maintained but realistically a large proportion of the budget is for staff costs. In terms of outcomes, the Commissioner acknowledged the crime figures are still reducing.
- Councillor Gaywood asked about the underspends in the current year's budgets for police officers and PCSOs and how the underspend is being used. The Commissioner responded that the decision had been taken to avoid the need for redundancies in the future by being cautious around recruitment which in turn led to the underspends. The Commissioner stated that he would be putting more challenge into the Chief Constable's management of resources.
- John Gili-Ross referred to the information regarding collaboration with Kent over the Serious Crime Directorate and the savings accruing to Kent contained in the note attached to the report on actions arising from the last meeting (Minute 4 above refers). This showed savings of £2.4m accruing to

Kent over a four-year period. The Commissioner explained that the benefits to Essex had been substantial in achieving greater reach and extension of the service. When the two Directorates combined, Kent had the more developed service and had been able to take advantage of financial savings from the partnership earlier on. Councillor Chambers declared a personal interest as the Chairman of the Police Authority at the time of the start of the collaboration.

- Councillor Buckley asked how many officer posts would potentially be lost and what would be the consequential impact on crime levels. The Commissioner reiterated that it was for the Chief Constable to manage the budget savings through the Evolve programme. In terms of focusing on outcomes, it would be for a reduction in the number of victims of crime. The Chairman reiterated the need for there to be an early opportunity to understand the impact of the budget savings.

The Commissioner pointed out that there may be a slight change needed to the budget figures in the light of the latest collection fund information from Harlow.

It having been moved by Councillor Chambers and seconded by Councillor McPherson, it was

Resolved:

That the Panel ratify the Commissioner's proposed increase in the Police Precept for 2014/15 of 1.97%.

Councillors Buckley, Butland and Gaywood requested that their names be recorded as having voted against.

6. Update from the Chief Constable

The Chairman on behalf of the Panel welcomed the Chief Constable to the meeting. The Chief Constable had asked if he could attend to report on the initial months of his appointment.

He reported that he had taken up office on 9 May last year, and was proud to have been appointed to the post. His focus is on keeping Essex safe. He wants the Force's senior management to be more visible to the public and to the Force in general. He has re-emphasised standards and will be holding the senior leadership to account. He wants to engender a sense of pride in being part of the Essex Force. With that in mind he has taken the three Seaxes from the County Badge and given each one a value as follows:

- reducing crime and harm
- the number of crimes solved
- the level of satisfaction with the service.

He is looking to simplify the performance regime, to drive out further efficiencies and to stress the importance of time management. He is looking at demand profiling to help determine the most efficient use of resources. He also wants to

have a better understanding of partnership working and the opportunities for efficiencies. He undertook to keep the Panel informed of the significant decisions that will need to be made.

He has decided to make a priority of the policing issues relating to the night time economy of the County, ensuring that people are able to enjoy themselves in safety.

The Chief Constable set out some figures for crime trends comparing 1 April with 31 December 2013, as set out on page 57 of the Agenda under Agenda item 8 (Police and Crime Plan Refresh 2014/15). These showed reductions in a number of categories of crime, but of concern to the Chief Constable were increases in the incidences of shoplifting, serious assaults and serious sexual crime.

He is also concerning himself with sickness levels amongst officers which are causing him concern. He is also giving his personal attention to the issues involved in responding to Domestic Abuse.

He stated that his commitment to the local policing model is absolute. He acknowledged that he had moved away from joint funding for PCSOs and was moving to a greater focus on local responsibility and working more effectively in policing hubs.

The following points were made during the ensuing discussion.

- In response to a question from Councillor Danvers the Chief Constable said that there needed to be time to assess the impact of Part Night Lighting on criminal activity. The Chairman reminded Councillor Danvers that an item on this matter is included on the Panel's Forward Look.
- In response to a question from Councillor Gaywood in relation to the underlying factors behind the sickness absence figures, the Chief Constable reported that he had done a considerable amount of work on this matter. There is a significant amount of short-term absences. It had not been treated as a sufficient priority in the past but he has now established a dedicated team to deal with the matter. The data is published monthly on the website.
- In response to questions from Councillor Buckley regarding clear-up rates and the impact on neighbourhood policing of the apparent high turnover in local officers the Chief Constable commented that he wanted officers to deal with the solved rates with integrity and Essex is moving up the table in relation to improvements in the solved rate. He will continue to drive improvement in this area. In relation to neighbourhood policing he will be asking District Commanders to commit to two years in the post. Working in hubs will help address the issue of continuity more generally.
- Councillor Butland asked the Commissioner to consider bringing the Chief Constable with him next year when discussing the precept in order to bring the budget debate to life.
- Councillor Young was pleased to learn of the Chief Constable's stand on the night-time economy and considered it was important to take a tough joint approach. In relation to alcohol-related crime he asked if the Chief Constable

supported the “Reducing the Strength” campaign. The Chief Constable responded that he supported the campaign and wanted to be more vocal about the partnership approach and the range of solutions available. It was important to deal with irresponsible businesses. The Deputy Commissioner reported on a pilot project being run in Colchester.

- In response to a question raised by John Gili-Ross relating to an increase in bicycle thefts the Chief Constable undertook to follow up the matter. John declared a personal interest as the Chairman of the local Neighbourhood Action Panel.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Constable for his attendance and hoped he would be willing to attend again in the future.

7. Police and Crime Plan Refresh 2014/15

The Panel considered report EPCP/028/14 by the Commissioner seeking feedback on the update of the Police and Crime Plan.

The Commissioner introduced three new members of his staff: Carly Fry, Assistant Director, Performance and Scrutiny; Louise Miles, Media and Engagement Officer; and Gwanwyn Mason, Assistant Director, Engagement. He explained that with his Office now in place he is better able to respond to the Panel’s questions and to step up engagement activity.

The Panel endorsed the original Plan in February 2013. It covered the period November 2012 - 2016. After one year in Office, the Commissioner is keen to refresh the plan to provide an update on progress made as well as indicate future developments. He is, however, clear that the overarching priorities set out in the original plan (the ‘8 key areas of focus’) remain the same.

The draft Police and Crime Plan 2014 attached as Annex “A” to the report represents an update and a look forward from the existing Plan. It is not a new Plan. Also included at Annex “B” was an overview of Community Safety Partnership priorities for 2014/15. The draft presents the text only. Once the text has been finalised, photographs and graphics will be added before publishing on the website. It will be presented in a very similar format to that of the original Plan.

The Commissioner explained that this is not a new plan but he is now able to give examples of work being undertaken. The Plan still highlights Domestic Abuse but he intends that in the future this will expand to take in offences against vulnerable people. He has also decided not to separate out Mental Health as a category in its own right as it forms part of a complex mix. The performance monitoring will get deeper. The Commissioner encouraged the sharing of the draft Plan with Community Safety Partnership managers, if appropriate.

The following points were made during the ensuing discussion.

- Kay Odysseos commented that she thought the draft plan was a good and accessible document. She pointed out that the list of functions of the Panel set out on Page 32 of the Agenda should include handling complaints made against the Commissioner. She also thought that the link between the New Initiative Fund and the Plan was not clear.
- In response to a question from Councillor Channer relating to the use of body worn cameras the Commissioner and the Executive Director gave further detail about the purchase of more modern equipment for Essex and Kent using a grant of £440,000 from the Home Office which will fund a significant share of the purchase.
- Councillor Gaywood thanked the Commissioner for recognising that offences against the vulnerable went beyond Domestic Abuse.
- Councillor McPherson commented that the Police needed to do more work with young people.

Resolved:

That the Panel endorse the draft Police and Crime Plan 2014 submitted as Annex "A" to report EPCP/028/14.

8. Police and Crime Panels – the first year

The Panel deferred consideration of a report (EPCP/029/14) by the Secretary to the Panel to an occasion when it has more time to give to the item and it can be considered in conjunction with examples of what other Panels are doing, including the possibility of Panel Members attending other Panels.

9. Forward Look

The Panel considered a report (EPCP/030/14) 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.

10. Update on On-going Issues

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

- The recruitment of Strategic Advisers to the Policing Board being created by the Commissioner. The intention is that the Board should meet three times a year with sub-committees for finance and ethics and integrity. He agreed that he owed the Panel a note on progress. (A report was subsequently sent out to the Panel from his Office.)
- The recent decision to dismiss a police officer following a gross misconduct hearing. The Commissioner commented that he expected the Chief Constable to uphold the values and standards of leadership.

20 February 2014

Chairman
19 June 2014