

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ESSEX POLICE AND CRIME PANEL HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD, ON 1 AUGUST 2013

Present:

Councillor

Malcolm Buckley
Graham Butland
Bob Shepherd
Tim Young
Gary Waller
John Jowers
Mike Danvers
Stephen Savage
Jo McPherson
Tony Cox
Peter Halliday
Angie Gaywood
Robert Chambers
Ann Haigh

Representing

Basildon Borough Council (Vice-Chairman)
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
Southend Borough Council
Tendring District Council
Thurrock Borough Council
Uttlesford District Council
Co-opted Member

Apologies for Absence

Chris Hossack	Brentwood Borough Council
Godfrey Isaacs	Castle Point Borough Council
Paul Sztumpf with Mike Danvers as his substitute	Harlow District Council
Penny Channer with Stephen Savage as her substitute	Maldon District Council

The following Officers were in attendance throughout the meeting:

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

Paul Warren, Chief Executive, Rochford District Council

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 26 March, 9 May and 18 July 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2. Matter arising from the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2013: Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Budget

3. Declarations of Interest

John Jowers and Jo McPherson declared an interest as members of Safer Essex. Jo McPherson also declared an interest in item 7 (Progress on Allocating Community Safety Grants 2013/14) as being employed by a recipient of a grant.

4. The Annual Report

The Panel considered a report (EPCP/09/13) by Helena Richardson, Operating Manager, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, presenting the Commissioner's Annual Report to the Panel for its review and recommendations.

The Chairman briefly introduced the item and invited each member of the Panel to comment on the content of the Commissioner's draft Annual Report. The Commissioner explained that he had tried to produce a report covering the whole year even though he had only been in post since November 2012. A sheet showing some outline Essex Police Performance statistics was tabled by the Commissioner. Also tabled was a document entitled Essex Police Monthly Performance Update for June 2013.

The following points were made during the ensuing debate.

- Page 15 of the draft report: in response to a question from Mike Danvers relating to Police vehicles involved in road collisions leading to people being killed or seriously injured, the Commissioner undertook to provide and circulate the information to the Panel members.
- Page 17 of the draft report: in response to a question from Mike Danvers in relation to the graph showing an overall reduction in crime since 2003/04 as to why there had been such a reduction, the Commissioner explained that this was as a result of the interaction of a number of complex factors involving for instance better policing, partners taking ownership and education. He had confidence in the accuracy of the figures.
In response to a question from Tony Cox also related to the reduction in crime and whether the Commissioner was confident that all crimes when reported are recorded, the Commissioner responded that it was not possible to guarantee 100% recording, particularly based on evidence from the practice in Kent. The Commissioner was alert to this from the beginning and has dug into the issue and has been assured that there are lots of measures in place but will never achieve 100%. The Police are keen to receive reports of crime in order to have better information to organise beats etc. This will never be perfect. The Commissioner will encourage best practice and look to ensure there is an audit trail. Tony Cox responded that data for Southend is not available and claimed that crimes reported to Neighbourhood Policing were not reported up. Without data local authorities were unable to act. The Commissioner encouraged him to report his concerns to the District Commander. It was important to get the gripes out into the open and to learn from them. Tony Cox said that it was important to be mindful of the impression on members of the public.
In response to a further question from Tony Cox as to whether a reduction in crime equated to a need for fewer police officers the Commissioner commented that this was the third year of reductions in police officer numbers and the number will continue to reduce. The reduction in crime is more complicated than the raw numbers. This is a stretch of officers.
- Graham Butland commented that the report was written as being about the Commissioner rather than a report written by the Commissioner and so felt one-step removed from where it needed to be. The Commissioner

commented that getting the style of the report right was difficult and that writing it in the first person had felt wrong.

- Page 8 of the draft report: in response to a question from Angie Gaywood in relation to the review by HMIC of the Force's approach to managing cases of domestic abuse and whether this would lead to a new strategy, the Commissioner explained that this was an evolving picture. The new Chief Constable was taking ownership of the matter and rethinking the Police response to Domestic Abuse. Outside expertise is being sought and a summit held to develop the Police's part of the Strategy. Consideration needs to be given as to how the Police will work with Councils in Essex, Southend and Thurrock. The Commissioner now leads the Whole Essex Partnership on Domestic Abuse. There needs to be earlier engagement in the process. Multi-agency hubs and a co-ordinating hub are being developed. The work of the Agencies involved needs to have greater impact. A major change programme is needed. The Police need to take a little bit more risk in their dealings with domestic abuse. This is a matter to which the Commissioner has a deep personal commitment.

In relation to the Essex Police Performance statistics tabled at the meeting Angie Gaywood asked if the figures for Serious Sexual Crime could be separated out to show the comparisons with general domestic violence. The Commissioner referred to the fact that the period April – June 2013 was showing a 25% increase in the reporting of serious sexual crime over the same period in 2012. He was happy with this increase. Detection rates had also increased. The figures reflected a 50% increase in the reporting of historic incidents. The figures were reported to Home Office Standards. He would give further consideration to the suggestion made for separating out the figures.

The Chairman too welcomed the increase in the number of cases reported. Ann Haigh also welcomed the increase in reporting numbers and of interagency working. She asked how the level of risk is calculated and whether any training is provided. The Commissioner explained that a highly-validated risk tool is used and that officers require training to operate it. He undertook to circulate a paper to the members on the tool. The criteria for identifying domestic criteria have been greatly widened so it is not possible to use it in every case or the police will tie themselves in knots.

- Page 16 of the draft report: Malcolm Buckley referred to the reduction in the number of officers and in the all crime solved rate from 29.7% in 2011/12 to 27% in 2012/13 and asked if there was a link. Following on from this he also asked if there was an opportunity to expand the use of Specials. The Commissioner responded that the reduction in the all solved crime rate is a disappointment. He had not set a target figure for this as he wants the Chief Constable to take ownership. He is optimistic that the Force has turned a corner on this. He was very enthusiastic about the Specials but currently numbers were low. The Chief Constable is committed to the Specials and links to volunteering. The Specials could have a role in the Crime Prevention Agenda; building community links; having a role in rural communities; generally having a more specialist role in the future.
- Page 14 of the draft report: Peter Halliday expressed disappointment that the figure for the seizure of funds and assets gained through criminal activity was only £2.2m. The Commissioner agreed that the figure could be higher and he wants to see an increase in this activity. It is something the Panel could

return to. Peter Halliday added that it was important to demonstrate that crime doesn't pay.

- Page 6 of the Monthly Performance Update: Angie Gaywood commented that in relation to supporting victims of crime: feedback and follow up, that in Thurrock victims were not receiving any feedback. The Commissioner responded that he expected feedback to be given and that the Chief Constable would be disappointed if that were the case.
- Page 10 of the Monthly Performance Update: Angie Gaywood commented that whilst the graph for incident classification showed Mental Health and Drugs on a steady line, there was no mention of what was being done in relation to mental health. The Commissioner responded that this was indicative data at this stage. The Police are currently working with MIND on the matter. He would provide information at the next meeting as part of the report on his performance.
- Page 12 of the Monthly Performance Update: Angie Gaywood commented that the information on Improving Road Safety made no mention of "cruisers" who are a problem in Thurrock. The Commissioner thought this was a good point and will give some thought about how to reflect this in the information.
- Page 29 of the Agenda supporting local engagement activity: Bob Shepherd sought clarification about how the local public engagement events were intended to work. The Commissioner clarified that the Commissioner would be asking the questions of the Chief Constable including questions from members of the public received in advance. It was not the intention to have long presentations or questions from the floor although it would be an opportunity to gauge the temperature of public feeling on specific issues.
- Page 14 of the draft report: In response to a question from Jo McPherson, the Commissioner undertook to circulate information on response times to 999 calls and attendance at emergency response incidents, to show by how much time responses missed the target. He commented that performance is improving.
- Page 14 of the draft report: Robert Chambers commented that the £2.2m figure for the seizure of funds and assets gained through criminal activity was increasing. Picking up on the comment made earlier in relation to Specials and rural policing he asked About the future of rural policing and asked whether it would all be undertaken by Specials. The Commissioner responded that the Chief Constable wanted police officers dedicated to all communities. The Commissioner saw the benefit of rural specials. Ultimately it is for Commanders to direct resources to meet need.

The Panel resolved that it would ask the Commissioner for a breakdown of the information relating to sexual violence beyond the Ministry of Justice standard as suggested above by Angie Gaywood. The Panel also requested further information on the deployment of Specials and Police Community Support Officers.

5. Establishing Effective Performance Management Arrangements

The Panel considered a report (EPCP/10/13) by the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner providing an overview of the performance management arrangements being established by the Commissioner and his Office.

The Chairman suggested that the Panel needed to establish for the purposes of this exercise what is important.

6. Progress on Allocating Community Safety Grants 2013/14

The Panel considered a report (EPCP/11/13) by the Treasurer of the Police and Crime Commissioner providing an update on the Commissioner's progress in allocating community safety grant monies.

7. Confirmatory Hearings: Paperwork to be requested

The Panel considered a report (EPCP/12/13) by the Secretary to the Panel concerning the need for any changes to the paperwork provided by the Commissioner's Office in support of a confirmatory hearing

8. Planning the Business of the Panel

The Panel considered a report (EPCP/13/13) by the Secretary to the Panel concerning the development of the Panel's forward plan of work and meetings.

9. 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.

10. Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved:

That, having reached the view that the public interest in maintaining the exemption (and discussing the matter in private) outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information, the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as specified in paragraph 4 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

11. Stage 2 Transfer Plan

(Exempt under paragraph 4 – information relating to labour relations matters)

The Panel considered a report (EPCP/14/13) by the Treasurer of the Police and Crime Commissioner providing an update on the progress of the Commissioner in submitting a Stage 2 Transfer Plan to the Home Secretary.

Chairman
22 October 2013