

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ESSEX POLICE AND CRIME PANEL HELD
AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD, ON 29 OCTOBER 2015**

Present:

Councillor

Tony Hedley
Graham Butland
Godfrey Isaacs
Bob Shepherd
Tim Young
John Jowers
Penny Channer
Jo McPherson
Ian Gilbert
Lynda McWilliams
Jane Potheary

Representing

Basildon Borough Council
Braintree District Council
Castle Point Borough Council
Chelmsford City Council
Colchester Borough Council
Essex County Council (Chairman)
Maldon District Council
Rochford District Council
Southend Borough Council
Tendring District Council
Thurrock Borough Council

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor

William Russell
Gary Waller
Tony Durcan
Jim Gordon
John Gili-Ross
Kay Odysseos

Representing

Brentwood Borough Council
Epping Forest District Council
Harlow District Council
Uttlesford District Council
Independent Member
Independent Member

County Councillor Michael Mackrory and Maldon District Councillor Stephen Savage were also in attendance.

The following Officers were in attendance throughout the meeting:
Terry Osborne, Director for Corporate Law and Assurance and Monitoring Officer, Essex County Council
Jane Gardner, Head of Commissioning Growing Essex Communities
Colin Ismay, Council and Member Support Manager, Essex County Council, Secretary to the Panel
Fiona Lancaster, Committee Officer, Essex County Council

Nick Alston, the Essex Police and Crime Commissioner, and Lindsay Whitehouse, Deputy Commissioner, were in attendance throughout and supported by Susannah Hancock, Chief Executive

Stephen Kavanagh, Chief Constable of Essex Police, was also in attendance throughout the meeting.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 May 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillors G Butland, T Hedley and J Jowers declared a personal interest as members of the Essex Fire Authority (minute 3 below refers).

3. Questions to the Chairman from Members of the Public

Councillors G Butland, T Hedley and J Jowers declared a personal interest in the questions regarding the location of the new Essex Police Headquarters (minute 2 above refers).

From Councillor Michael Mackrory

Councillor Mackrory asked for comments on why a decision to locate the new Essex Police Headquarters (HQ) on the Essex Fire Authority's (EFA) Kelvedon Park site had not been pursued, what planning permission requests Chelmsford City Council could anticipate in relation to housing development plans on the existing Essex Police HQ Springfield site, and how levels of service would be maintained where stations are being closed eg in Brentwood, Epping Forest and Uttlesford.

In response, the Chairman explained that the possibility of locating the new Essex Police HQ at Kelvedon Park had been considered, but the problems with only one route of access on and off the A12, together with the hazardous slip roads, meant that a new location in Chelmsford was preferred.

The Chairman confirmed that any residential development plans for the Essex Police HQ Springfield site would be subject to Chelmsford City Council planning regulations.

Councillor Hedley reported that with significant investment, and subject to planning permission, another building could be accommodated at the EFA's Kelvedon Park site. There were other areas such as the Control Room, IT systems and Human Resources where Essex Police and the EFA could consider shared services, although integration would not be straightforward and further investment would be required. He also reminded the Panel that the Government had a commitment to explore the opportunity for Police and Crime Commissioners to take over the responsibility for the Fire Services.

4. Actions arising from the last meeting

The Panel received report EPCP/013/15 by the Secretary to the Panel highlighting the matters raised during the previous meeting that required further action and indicating the action taken.

The Commissioner reported that the detailed work on reported child offences was continuing and was an integral part of the regular scrutiny of police performance.

The Commissioner confirmed that he would provide a further update on 'Airwave' at a future meeting.

5. Membership

The Panel received report EPCP/014/15 by the Secretary to the Panel reviewing the membership of the Panel.

The Panel considered whether the vacancy created after the resignation of Ann Haigh as a co-opted member needed to be filled to achieve a better political balance.

The Panel agreed that, taking into account the political alliances of Councillor Tim Young and his substitute Councillor Dominic Graham, no further action was needed at this stage to appoint a co-opted member.

6. Responding to Today's Demands Planning for Tomorrow's Challenges

The Panel considered report EPCP/015/15 which outlined the proposals announced on 6 October by the Chief Constable and the Commissioner to deliver a police force fit for the future.

The Commissioner and Chief Constable highlighted the key reasons for the proposals for change, some of which would have been made regardless of the financial challenges. These included the fact that previously there had been a lack of a long-term strategy and investment in Essex Police, in particular regarding the Police Estate, the failing 101 Service, a lack of investment in IT systems, and the obstacles preventing public contact and engagement.

Panel Members noted the changes already made to shift patterns to enable the service to better respond in times of peak demand, and the movement of resources into the previously neglected areas of domestic abuse and serious sexual offences in order to deliver a high quality of investigation.

The following points were made during the ensuing discussion.

- Panel Members indicated their support for the proposals and their acceptance of the logic behind these.
- Concern was expressed about some of the potentially contradictory messages being given to residents. For example, the mistaken belief that an increase in the police precept would result in more police officers across the County.
- Panel Members indicated that contact between the police and communities needed improvement, and that it would be helpful for the Panel to receive a copy of the public engagement plan to understand how the police intend to work with partners.
- Residents were still unclear about whether to call the 101 Service rather than email police officers to ensure incidents were recorded. Panel Members reported that they had received complaints about the 101 Service, and some residents had expressed concern about what services were being moved online and the channels through which they could

contact the police. The Commissioner undertook to provide the Panel with a summary of the police public contact plan which showed the various channels through which residents could access the police.

- Panel Members expressed disappointment in the way they had been notified about the handling of anti-social behaviour incidents and what action the police now expected of local councils. They also questioned the approach taken by the police to divulge to residents that they would not now attend low level incidents. The Chief Constable apologised for the way the notification regarding anti-social behaviour had been handled.
- The likelihood that more cuts in the police service could lead to increasing levels of crime, and concern in particular regarding the increases already witnessed in Colchester Borough, with some driven by drug dealing gang activity from outside of the County.
- The Panel acknowledged that youth offending crime was falling.
- That crime is exported between neighbouring counties and London, and the importance of Athena in tracking offenders across boundaries.
- Residents' misconception that closing police stations will affect response times and how this can be better communicated to residents.
- That the loss of PCSO's will leave gaps in the service provided to communities.
- The Chairman urged Panel Members to write to the Home Secretary regarding police funding.
- The Chief Constable asked Panel Members to encourage their residents to continue to report all incidents of crime.

7. Update from the Chief Constable

This update was considered in conjunction with agenda item 7 (Responding to Today's Demands Planning for Tomorrow's Challenges).

8. Review of Complaints Procedure

The Panel considered report EPCP/016/15 by the Director for Corporate Law and Assurance, Essex County Council, which sought approval to a revised process for dealing with complaints made about the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner.

The following points were made during the ensuing discussion.

- That the proposed revisions had resulted from a year's experience in operating the complaints process, and in the light of guidance issued by the Local Government Association in April 2015. The process now

focused on looking to achieve informal resolution. Some new aspects of the process related to the role of the Monitoring Officer to decide the most appropriate approach to resolving a complaint, and the opportunity to dis-apply the process and delegate to the Monitoring Officer in limited circumstances.

- In response to concerns expressed by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC), the Monitoring Officer offered to remove the examples provided in Appendix 1 of the report, and to develop a simplified guide on the process, with input from the OPCC.
- The Monitoring Officer accepted that any suggestion to dis-apply a complaint process should be in consultation with the Chairman.
- The Commissioner said that he and his office had a number of concerns with the draft process, which they had raised with the Monitoring Officer. He said that not all the concerns raised by his office had been recognised or accepted in the report. The key areas which contained issues of ambiguity included the role of the Monitoring Officer under delegated powers and the Commissioner's accountability to Essex constituents, the Commissioner's role in referring complaints about the Chief Constable to the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), clarity around complaints in relation to OPCC staff, and the accessibility of the document.
- The Chief Executive, OPCC, expressed concerns about the process on sharing sensitive/confidential information between parties and how this would work in practice. She also felt there had been insufficient time for a review of the latest draft ahead of the meeting.
- Panel Members accepted the concessions made by the Monitoring Officer as a result of feedback from the OPCC, but expressed the view that they were unsure of the stumbling blocks which were holding up the settlement of the revised process and were concerned about the underlying tensions.
- A suggestion that Councillor Shepherd mediate discussions between the OPCC and the County Council was not agreed.
- The Commissioner stated that he would decline to engage with the Panel if the revised process was adopted in its current format.
- Some Panel Members expressed their concern at the Commissioner's response.
- The Secretary undertook to circulate a copy of the relevant Regulations to the Panel Members.
- The Panel agreed a fourth recommendation as follows:
 - (4) the Monitoring Officer and OPCC be authorised to review and make changes to the Revised Complaints Process if they are both in

agreement, and to present a new document to the next scheduled Panel meeting on Thursday 26 November 2015 for agreement by the Panel.

RESOLVED:

- (1) To adopt the Revised Complaints Process in the form at Appendix 1.
- (2) To adopt the terms of reference for the Complaints Sub-Committee as set out at Appendix 3.
- (3) To agree to delegate decision-making to officers to make decisions as set out in the Complaints Process at Appendix 1.
- (4) That the Monitoring Officer and OPCC be authorised to review and make changes to the Revised Complaints Process if they are both in agreement, and to present a new document to the next scheduled Panel meeting on Thursday 26 November 2015 for agreement by the Panel.

9. Forward Look

The Panel considered report EPCP/017/15 by the Secretary to the Panel concerning the planning of the Panel's business.

The Secretary to the Panel undertook to amend the wording in relation to the business shown for the May 2016 meeting. Otherwise, the Panel agreed the business proposed for the scheduled future meetings.

10. Update on On-going Issues

The Commissioner reported that he was continuing to hold Essex Police Challenge events and Panel members were encouraged to attend.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The Panel noted that the next formal meeting would take place at 14:30 on Thursday, 26 November 2015, in Committee Room 1, County Hall, and that this would be preceded by a private pre-meeting starting at 13:45.

Chairman
26 November 2015