

Minutes of the meeting of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel, held in Committee Room 1 County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH on Thursday, 24 January 2019

**Present:**

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Representing</b>
Anthony Hedley	Basildon Borough Council
Keith Parker	Brentwood District Council
Godfrey Isaacs	Castle Point Borough Council
Bob Shepherd	Chelmsford City Council
Mike Lilley	Colchester Borough Council
Sam Kane	Epping Forest District Council
Malcolm Maddocks	Essex County Council (Chairman)
Mike Danvers	Harlow District Council
Penny Channer	Maldon District Council
Mike Webb	Rochford District Council
Ann Holland	Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
Lynda McWilliams	Tendring District Council
Joycelyn Redsell	Thurrock Council
Susan Barker	Uttlesford District Council
John Gili-Ross	Independent Member
Kay Odysseos	Independent Member

**Apologies for Absence**

Chris Hossack	Brentwood Borough Council
Chris Vince	Harlow District Council
Jo McPherson	Rochford District Council
Lynda McWilliams	Tendring District Council

**1 Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest**

The report of the Membership, Apologies and Declarations was received and it was noted that

1. Councillor Chris Hossack, Brentwood Borough Council; Councillor Chris Vince, Harlow District Council; Councillor Jo McPherson, Rochford District Council and Councillor Lynda McWilliams, Tendring District Council had sent their apologies.
2. Councillor Keith Parker, Brentwood Borough Council substituted for Councillor Hossack; Councillor Mike Danvers, Harlow District Council substituted for Councillor Vince; and Councillor Mike Webb, Rochford District Council substituted for Councillor McPherson.
3. Councillors declared Code Interests as follows:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Nature of Interest</b>
M Maddocks	In receipt of a Police Pension
S Kane	Chairman of local Community Safety Partnership
G Isaacs	Vice-Chairman of local Community Safety Partnership
J Redsell	Member of the Essex, Southend and Thurrock Safeguarding Committee
A Holland	Her son is a serving Police Officer

## 2 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman following the agreed amendment below:

Minute 1 (item 1): Councillor Vic Ranger was not in attendance; hence, had not declared an interest.

## 3 **Questions from the public**

There were none.

## 4 **Proposed Essex Police Precept for 2019/20**

The Commissioner was accompanied by Chief Constable BJ Harrington; Pippa Brent-Isherwood, Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer of the Office of the PFCC; Jane Gardner, Deputy Commissioner; and Debbie Martin, S151 Officer of Essex Police. In introduction the Commissioner acknowledged the proposed precept is a big ask; and does not sit easily with him and the public - whilst supportive of the increase when surveyed - will need to be shown and sold the benefits of the increase.

Police and Crime Commissioners, nationally, have worked with the Home Office to get on top of the rising level of crime and the need for more police. Violent crime and internet crime have both increased significantly; and there is also an increase in domestic violence. This has led to a substantial increase in police time since May 2015. Last year the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) requested a £445m increase in funding with an additional £890m for 2019/20 – this was just asking for increases in line with the rate of inflation. There are also incremental factors such as the 2% rise in police pay, which the government has needed to find £330m for and pension contributions. This all means that additional officers need to be funded from a council tax increase. The work undertaken nationally concluded a figure of a £24 increase on a Band D property would be sufficient to cover the requirement of more additional police officers. It is hoped that there could be additional funds from central government to provide additional support.

Last years' precept was implemented and 150 new police officers have been recruited, of which 113 are front-line with the others involved in

operational support; with one operating in the cyber-crime unit. All the additional officers have now been recruited and trained. Deployment commenced at the end of November 2018 and will be fully complete by the first week in March. The Commissioner stated he recognised residents will have not been aware of the benefit of these additional officers, quite yet.

The Commissioner stated in order to get on top of the rising level of crime and to ensure it is tackled and falls the precept needs to be increased; and the argument to the Home Office for additional funding would be undermined if he did not propose the increase. He stated increasing the precept is the right thing to do and the public survey undertaken showed very strong support for an increase, with 73% of respondents endorsing an increase of, in excess of £20; and 48% of respondents endorsing an increase of, in excess of £25.

The Commissioner explained Essex residents get greater benefit from local taxation than they do for income tax on VAT. His focus is on the safety of Essex residents and this is achieved more effectively via increases in the police precept. The Commissioner reminded the Panel that vulnerable people pay between 0-20% of the council tax rates following the application of discounted rates.

In response to questions from the Panel the Commissioner and the Chief Constable stated:

- Over 4,000 people responded to the survey, in comparison to 5,000 last year. As a survey this is a very good response; and he acknowledged that if residents do not see the benefits of the precept increase they would have the option of rejecting him at the ballot box
- All Council Leaders were written to outlining detail per district in terms of additional police officers as a result of the precept increase last year. The Commissioner committed to bringing an update to a future meeting with confirmed final figures for 2019/20 coming to a later meeting of the Panel – each district will get the appropriate number of new officers. Other new officers will go into central investigative teams which will work across the county
- Essex Police is tackling rural crime and there has been a reduction in illegal hare coursing and the number of unlawful gypsy and traveller incursions. The size of rural area teams will double if the precept is increased as proposed
- The 68 town centre officers (58 PCs; 10 police sergeants) will be based in any settlement with at least 15,000 inhabitants (based upon the 2011 National Census), as well as metrics related to anti-social behaviour, crimes and offences recorded and actual crimes committed per 1,000 head of population. Therefore, 22 towns and cities fit these definitions. This resource will be moved according to

---

need. The Panel will be provided with the list of localities which have town centre officers

- The public will have not necessarily noticed the additional officers since the precept rise last year as the officers are only just being deployed; therefore, the perception of lack of police visibility is acknowledged. It does take a long time to recruit, train and then deploy new officers. However, local and accessible policing is one of the seven priorities in the Police and Crime Plan with the additional officers an important building-block for making the case to the Home Office for additional funding. With over 1,000 people killed or injured on Essex roads every year it is clear that the road teams are currently visible
- The precept increase last year was unprecedented, but a further increase is required to deliver on tackling crime and keeping the public safe
- The current recruitment drive is having a positive impact on the morale of serving officers. It is also hoped the additional officers will see a change in the rhetoric at public meetings as the extra resource becomes apparent, and change public perceptions
- There is confidence that the force has the capacity to recruit the additional officers as this has been tested. Recruitment will take place as soon as practicable as the police qualifications are changing and becoming tougher; and thus, recruitment and deployment will take longer in the future. The 215 additional officers the precept rise will provide for Essex will be appointed, trained and deployed within 53 weeks
- With regard to capital receipts it was confirmed the 14.16% figure referenced in the report is the request for endorsement for 2019/20. The 2% and 0% figures quoted for the next two-years are included because the Chief Constable is requested to work on the basis of a flat increase, for the purpose of medium-term projections. The 2% in 2020/21 is due to the need to identify £4.1m of financial savings. Future projections for the next two years will be presented to the Panel in December 2019. The capital programme backs a substantial investment in fixed assets which is a net saving to the service
- There is always a vacancy factor based upon recruitment and retention and it is recognised that there is a vacancy level that is always kept. Support staff are increasing and there is ongoing Human Resources and Occupational Health support needed for the increasing number of staff
- Over 300,000 schoolchildren have been engaged with joint police and fire and rescue service visits in the last year, throughout the county. Research has been undertaken which shows the police are

not seen as a trusted adult by many schoolchildren; and this is something that is being addressed. Policing is a community activity and if we lose the link to schoolchildren we lose that community aspect which makes police work so different in the UK from many other parts of the world. The investment will also mean that there can be greater engagement with schools with an extra 20 officers allocated to schools. Over 4,000 crimes in the county involve young people as victims or perpetrators

- The largest policing team is committed to Southend-on-Sea
- Mobile policing units are still used as part of Essex Police operations
- With regard to the maintenance and refurbishment of estates it is business as usual. The estate will be better for flexible working and provide a more conducive environment
- Priorities are where violent crime is rising and expectations will be managed on this basis with honesty and transparency. There is confirmation that there will be more visible policing throughout Uttlesford

The Commissioner acknowledged that Colchester BC pays £220,000 for an additional five officers for Colchester town centre and the additional contributions made by Epping Forest DC, Southend-on-Sea BC and town and parish councils throughout the county. Special constables provide the link between law and order and the community and offer are particularly great value for money for the county.

Panel members made the following observations:

Councillor Parker stated the proposal to increase the precept should ensure the accent is on visible not backroom policing.

Councillor Holland informed the Panel that partnership working in the Southend-on-Sea BC area has been positive and that she had taken representation from residents supporting the proposal to increase the precept. She also stated she did not believe that timing of the survey is ideal. She also queried why the proposed increase could not be staggered over a three-year period. It was explained that this was for the reasons discussed previously, especially relating to the need to tackle increases in violent crime, especially now in order to stem the rising demand on policing services.

Councillor Isaacs stated his belief that the proposed precept increase was not something residents of Castle Point would support. The increase last year has not, so far, increased the visibility of the police.

Councillor Barker stated she would have liked to have seen a more substantial medium-term financial strategy presented as part of the precept proposals.

Councillor Lilley informed the Commissioner that he would not be supporting the proposal to increase the precept. It is his belief that the funding should come from central government. He queried why a parish council would use their precept to pay for a special constable and now be levied a precept rise to pay for more police officers. In response it was highlighted that, whether police funding is provided by central government or through the Council Tax precept, ultimately it is all sourced from local tax payers.

Councillor Redsell wished it to be placed on record that some parishes have no crime whatsoever.

Councillor Danvers stated he fully supported the proposed increase and acknowledged the Commissioner is trying to address previous cuts. He stated public services need to be properly funded and that Harlow DC had funded police officers due to previous cuts.

Councillor Webb stated Rochford DC residents would be supportive of the proposal to increase the precept

The recommendation that there be a precept increase of 14.16%, equivalent to an increase of £23.94 a year from £169.02 to £192.96 for a Band D property, raising £15.3m of additional council tax receipts was put to the vote by the Panel Chairman Following consideration of the report and having listened to his justification of the need for an increase, the Panel voted to accept the Commissioner's proposal for a precept increase with 13 for; two against (Cllr's Hedley and Lilley); and one abstention (Cllr Barker).

Councillor Mike Danvers and Councillor Sam Kane left the meeting at 3.45 p.m.

## **5 Proposed Essex Fire and Rescue Authority Precept for 2019/20**

The Commissioner was accompanied by Jo Turton, Chief Executive and Chief Fire Officer; Pippa Brent-Isherwood, Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer of the Office of the PFCC; Jane Gardner, Deputy Commissioner; and Glenn McGuinness, S151 Officer of Essex County Fire and Rescue Service. In introduction the Commissioner stated the referendum limit is a rise in the precept of 3% or more. The proposed increase is set at 2.94% which is the equivalent of a £2.07 increase for a band D council tax property. This would raise an additional £1.32m of council tax receipts.

In response to questions from the Panel the Commissioner, and the Chief Executive and Chief Fire Officer stated:

- The incremental elements, which have led to over £800,000 of budgetary pressures are as a result of the move from day- to on-call crewing at Dovercourt and South Woodham Ferrers fire stations
- Pay policy has meant the budget line for staffing is £518,000 above the original calculations

Panel members made the following observations:

Councillor Isaacs stated residents see the fire and rescue service as, without doubt, an excellent service and appreciate the community and preventative work it undertakes – which ensures visibility of the service. These comments were echoed by Councillor Channer.

Councillor Redsell agreed there is a greater bond between the public and the fire and rescue service that there is with the police. She suggested the police could learn from what the fire and rescue service does to reflect the good work it undertakes.

Councillor Barker commended the report but reminded the Panel that even though the proposed fire precept was more palatable than the police precept it is still the maximum increase that is being requested.

Councillor Parker stated that councils are seeking maximum increases; the police precept is high; and the fire precept is also set at the maximum allowable. On this basis

Councillor Hedley paid tribute to Glenn McGuinness for the work he undertook when Councillor Hedley was Chairman of the Fire Authority.

The Chief Executive and Chief Fire Officer stated she would feed these positive comments back to the service.

The recommendations that:

- there be a precept increase of 2.94% equivalent to an increase of £2.07 a year from £70.38 to £72.45 for a Band D property, raising £1.321m of additional council tax receipts
- the budget for 2019/20 is drawn up on the basis that existing reserves of £2.4m are utilised in the year
- to note the impact of public-sector pay restraint on the budget and precept of the Authority. In this context, the Authority has provided for 2% across the board pay inflation at a cost of c. £1.035m in 2019/20
- the Commissioner instructs the Chief Executive/Chief Fire Officer to prepare a medium-term financial plan to achieve a balanced budget without using reserves by the 2021/22 financial year

were put to the vote by the Panel Chairman. Following consideration of the report and having listened to his justification of the need for an increase, the Panel voted to unanimously to accept the Commissioner's recommendations.

Councillor Ann Holland left the meeting at 4.05 p.m.

## **6 Essex Police Quarterly Performance Report**

The Commissioner accompanied by Pippa Brent-Isherwood and Jane Gardner introduced the report and highlighted Essex has the second fastest growing Special Constabulary in the country with more work being undertaken with Parish Councils but there is more to do. There is also work taking place with employers to provide Employer Supported Policing Schemes. The Commissioner stated he would strongly encourage all councils in Essex to have more volunteers in the sector.

There has been a considerable impact in drugs policing with a particularly significant raid in Epping Forest in November 2018. There has been a 47% increase in driving under the influence of drugs and such investigations are more expensive than drink driving. November 2018 was the first month ever where there were more arrests for driving under the influence of drugs rather than alcohol. This is a particular issue with drivers under the age of 25.

There is still a great deal of work to do and that is why the precept increase is so vital.

During discussion the following points were made:

Councillor Hedley stated that the word 'recreational' should not be used in relation to drugs. The substances are illegal and, thus, criminality is taking place with regard to all drug use.

Councillor Lilley praised special constables in Colchester where two were recently seriously injured. He stated they are volunteers who do a fabulous job.

Councillor Barker queried the improvement on the 101 service in terms of the waiting time. It was clarified that the time referred to is for a resolution to the call not how long callers wait for the telephone to be answered.

Councillor Redsell reported that officers do not seem to always answer their mobile telephones.

## **7 Essex Police Fire, and Crime Commissioner's Decisions Report**

In response to a question the Deputy Commissioner outlined that the decision regarding the Sanctus Charity is for a development grant to support mental health for the homeless during the winter months.

The report was noted by the Panel. Councillor Hedley left the meeting at 4.25 p.m.



---

**8            The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner to update the Panel on any ongoing issues**

The Commissioner reminded the Panel the Essex Fire and Rescue Plan will be received at the next meeting. There had been in excess of 2,800 responses to the public consultation on the plan which ended this month. All the priorities were strongly supported. He thanked the Panel's sub-group for its work on the Plan. Councillor Maddocks placed on record his thanks to Councillor's Hedley, Isaacs, McWilliams; and John Gili-Ross for the work they undertook on the sub-group which he Chaired.

Three of the four members of the senior leadership team for the Essex Fire and Rescue Service have been recruited with the new colleagues joining in April. The post of Deputy Chief Fire Officer is a secondment from Cambridgeshire.

Assistant Chief Constable Pippa Mills has been appointed to the post of Deputy Chief Constable and takes on the role from 4 March. Recruitment for a new Assistant Chief Constable will commence shortly.

The BBC Victoria Derbyshire Show centred on the Athena system on its 24 January edition. The clip focussed on the teething problems there have been – downtime is not an issue at present despite the report.

**9            Forward Look**

It was agreed to add an Emergency Services Network update and IT implementation update to the Forward Look.

**10          Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be at 2.00 p.m. on Thursday, 7 February 2019 in Committee Room 1, County Hall, Chelmsford. There will be a pre-meeting for Panel members only from 1.15 p.m.

With no urgent business the meeting closed at 4.38 p.m.

**Chairman**  
7 February 2019