

# **NOTTINGHAMSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL**

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6 FEBRUARY 2013 AT 10.30 AM AT COUNTY HALL, WEST BRIDGFORD, NOTTINGHAM**

### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

(A denotes absent)

Chairman - Councillor John Clarke – Gedling Borough Council

Vice-Chairman - Executive Mayor Tony Egginton – Mansfield District Council

Councillor David Challinor – Bassetlaw District Council

Councillor Eunice Campbell – Nottingham City Council

Councillor Jon Collins – Nottingham City Council - A

Councillor Georgina Culley – Nottingham City Council (Item 5 onwards)

Councillor Eddie Fearon – Rushcliffe Borough Council

Christine Goldstraw – Independent Member

Suma Harding – Independent Member

Councillor Eric Kerry – Nottinghamshire County Council

Councillor John Knight – Ashfield District Council - A

Councillor Pat Lally – Broxtowe Borough Council

Councillor Keith Longdon – Nottinghamshire County Council - A

Councillor Alex Norris – Nottingham City Council

Councillor Tony Roberts MBE – Newark and Sherwood District Council

Councillor John Wilmott – Ashfield District Council (substitute for Cllr Knight)

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

Jayne Francis-Ward – Monitoring Officer ) Nottinghamshire

Keith Ford – Senior Democratic Services Officer ) County Council

Paul Simpson – Section 151 Officer ) (Host Authority)

### **OTHERS PRESENT**

Paddy Tipping – Police and Crime Commissioner

Chris Cutland – Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner

Kevin Dennis – Chief Executive, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

Charlotte Radford – Chief Finance Officer, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

## **1. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2013, having been previously circulated, were agreed as a true and correct record and were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

## **2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jon Collins, John Knight and Keith Longdon.

### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

None.

### **4. POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER'S PRECEPT AND BUDGET**

The Commissioner introduced his proposed budget for 2013-14 and highlighted the following key points:-

- the scale of the savings required in Nottinghamshire were underlined, with £42m (approximately 20% of the budget) needed over the next four years. Approximately half of these savings had been identified. In broad terms but £8.5 million was needed in 2013/14. This was also affected by the ongoing funding issues, with an underfunding of £10.5m in Nottinghamshire next year resulting from the current formula and damping mechanisms. The Commissioner had met with the Police Minister recently and had underlined the urgent need for a review of this funding formula. This review was due to start soon but it could take up to two years, with some areas winning and losing as a result of the changes and some form of transitional period therefore required. The proposed revenue budget for 2013.14 was £196.9 million;
- despite these financial pressures, the Commissioner was confident that he could achieve his commitment to recruit an additional 150 Police Officers. The Commissioner planned to recruit 150 new Police Officers by 31 March 2014, although there would be some further staff turnover during that period due to officers leaving the Force. 35 additional Police and Community Support Officers (PCSOs) would be recruited in each of the next three financial years. These officers would be based within Neighbourhood Policing teams. The Commissioner proposed a 1.95% increase in the Council Tax policing precept to help fund this recruitment. The Commissioner had considered taking the freeze grant (equivalent to 1% increase in Council Tax this year) offered by Central Government to Commissioners who chose to freeze their precept levels at the existing rate. However, he did not think that this was a sustainable option in terms of funding these new posts in the long-term and he felt that the Police were already overly-dependent upon Central Government funding;
- the Commissioner acknowledged that the reserves position was extremely healthy but he planned to use some of these reserves to mitigate against the savings required in future years;
- the Commissioner underlined the commitment of the Chief Constable and Deputy Chief Constable to the proposed budget;

- a review of the previous Police Authority's decision to disband the Force's mounted section had been undertaken in line with the Commissioner's manifesto commitment. A report on this review had been published on the Commissioner's website and this had revealed that it would cost £420,000 to reinstate this section. The Commissioner felt that this money would be better spent on increasing the uniformed presence on the streets and the Chief Constable had also felt that a mounted section was not a priority currently. The Commissioner highlighted that the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) was undertaking research to explore the potential for a national mounted section resource and Nottinghamshire would consider being involved in any such development;
- the Commissioner was proposing grants of £1.7 million and £1.3 million to the Community Safety Partnerships in the City and County respectively. He had also created a partnership budget of £500,000 which he planned to grow over time to fund initiatives with partners to prevent crime;
- The Commissioner had challenged regional partners about expenditure and hoped to see a future reduction in regional costs that reflected the reduction in policing costs in Nottinghamshire. The Commissioner had approved the 2013/14 budget which was less than the 2012/13 budget, with a view to reducing these contributions by 5-10% in future years. The Commissioner stated that he was not convinced that Nottinghamshire was getting full value for money from regional collaboration and he was keen to discuss this issue further with the Panel at a future meeting;
- a base budget review was planned for the first six months of the 2013/14 financial year. Different priorities were likely to emerge over the next twelve months and in light of there being no further funding some very difficult funding decisions would need to be made.

During discussions, Members raised the following issues:-

- local residents in Ashfield welcomed the proposal for additional Police Officers but were not in favour of an increase in the Council Tax precept in light of the growing severe financial difficulties in that area. Such an increase was particularly difficult to support in light of the Force's underspend in the current financial year. The Commissioner stated that he would be happy to discuss this further with Ashfield residents but the consultation he had undertaken had shown that the public were willing to pay an extra 4p per week on average to fund these additional officers;
- Members highlighted that the proposed levels of recruitment would result in more than 150 additional Police Officers and queried whether this was to counter the impact of retirements. The Commissioners explained that more officers were leaving the Force, both locally and nationally, than had been anticipated. This was due to changes in terms and conditions and pensions. It was predicted that 78 officers would leave Nottinghamshire Police next year with 150 new officers recruited. Based on the forecasts contained within the Medium Term Financial Plan, it was predicted that

there would be an extra 228 front line officers in post by the end of the Commissioner's term of office (April 2017);

- Members recognised the need to take a prudent approach within financial management but queried the level of uncommitted reserves. In response, the Commissioner stated that it was approximately £7m. Paul Simpson calculated that by 2015/16 the level of uncommitted reserves would be approximately £9.3m. Charlotte Radford underlined that the figure was £7m. The Commissioner said that some of the underspend would be added to committed reserves;
- with regard to the potential impact of the current A19 process industrial tribunal, the Commissioner stated that provision had been made in the reserves to meet the costs of a negative outcome, whilst he had insisted that each of the five Forces involved in the case share the same legal representatives in order to reduce costs (the total legal cost was likely to be £600,000 which would be split between the five Forces);
- some Members welcomed the fact that the Commissioner was honouring his manifesto commitment to recruit additional officers and they felt that the proposed precept increase was needed in order to finance that commitment. Members likened the freeze grant on offer from Central Government to a 'pay day loan' and did not feel it was prudent to use such funding or reserves for a permanent increased staffing establishment. It was underlined that the public had supported an increase in officers in the Commissioner's budget consultation and highlighted the year-on-year increases in the costs of utility services. Members also recognised the need to have reserves at the proposed level in light of the ongoing nature of the Comprehensive Spending Review. The Commissioner agreed with these views and underlined his desire to get increased value from the budget by undertaking a zero base budget review in the Spring, with external challenge also from the new Audit and Scrutiny Panel. He stated that he was very keen to involve the Police and Crime Panel in that review. Each line of the budget would be queried with the Force challenged as to whether the same service could be provided for less money. Members welcomed such a review but queried whether the proposed increase in income generation in 2014/15 could begin to be introduced in 2013/14 instead. The Commissioner had queried that issue himself with the Force although it was recognised that the potential means of generating income were limited as most of the Police's activity was statutorily required. Members recognised that the Police was primarily a deliverer of public services and law and order rather than a commercial enterprise and that in the current climate the public needed greater reassurance. The Commissioner also underlined his commitment to co-location with other public services where possible, as with Rushcliffe Borough Council currently and the plans for Broxtowe and Gedling;
- with regard to the current level of underspend, it was underlined that the amount of experienced officers choosing to leave this year had been unprecedented and higher than predicted. Members queried the plans to

address this via recruitment and retention. The Commissioner underlined that both locally and nationally the current levels of officers leaving was being viewed as a 'spike', resulting from the future pension changes. There would be a continued need to manage this for the next two years ahead of the pension changes being implemented. The new recruitment was also being viewed as an opportunity to address the previous trend of an increasing average age of officers. It was felt that as younger officers were recruited, the retention rate would consequently improve. Despite there being an underspend this year there was still a funding gap in terms of the costs of the new recruitment which did require the proposed precept increase;

- it was underlined that some Members had opposed the Police Authority's previous precept increase in 2012/13 and they felt that in hindsight, based on the levels of underspend and savings, this minority view had been justified. Members underlined that there was a history of underspending by the Force and queried long-term plans to continue the modernisation of services and to address the ongoing anticipated reduction in Central Government grant. With regard to the public's positive response to an increase in officers, some Members felt that a similar affirmative response would have been received if the public had been asked whether they supported taking the freeze grant in order for the precept to remain at the existing level. It was also felt that more detail about the levels of reserves should have been included in the papers to the Panel. In response, the Commissioner offered to share further information about reserves and underlined the need for any recruitment to be sustainable, especially in light of the ongoing Comprehensive Spending Review. He agreed that the ongoing underspending did suggest bad management control although there were other elements to this issue which would be fully considered as part of the base budget review. He underlined that in all of the consultation meetings he had held nobody had argued that they would not be prepared to pay the additional money arising from the precept increase. Members queried whether the Commissioner was not confident that the base budget review would deliver the £500,000 difference between the freeze grant and the precept increase (although it was recognised that the 'cliff edge' effect of taking the freeze grant this year would result in an increased funding gap of £1m the following year);
- in response to Members' queries, the Commissioner underlined his commitment to Neighbourhood Watch, with Community Safety grant being used to fund the County and City schemes. Members highlighted how prudent voluntary and community organisations were often turned down for funding due to their level of reserves and contrasted this situation to the proposed precept increase. The Deputy Commissioner stated that £500,000 had been set aside for small grants to small organisations. The criteria, terms and performance management proposals for this funding were currently being developed and the level of reserves would form an element of this. The Commissioner underlined that he was keen to commission relevant services over a longer period of time;

- Members underlined their willingness to support the Commissioner in his lobbying of Central Government to improve the grant funding arrangements;
- the Commissioner underlined his desire to get improved value from the Force's two PFI (Public Finance Initiative) contracts relating to the Force's fleet of vehicles and the Riverside Building;
- Members were particularly minded to support the Commissioner in his first year in office but underlined the need to address the ongoing history of underspends.

#### **RESOLVED 2013/001**

**That the decision of the Commissioner to increase the Council Tax precept by 1.95% for the 2013/14 financial year be supported.**

Councillors Fearon and Kerry requested that their votes opposing the above resolution be recorded.

#### **5. POLICE AND CRIME PLAN**

The Commissioner explained that the consultation around the draft Plan was ongoing and that a final draft should be available by the beginning of March. He suggested that this final draft be shared with the Panel Chairman and Vice-Chairman so that they could consider whether the extent of the changes warranted the Panel meeting ahead of its planned next meeting on 15 April 2013 to consider this amended version of the Plan prior to its publication.

#### **RESOLVED 2013/002**

- 1) **That the final draft of the Plan be shared with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman following consultation.**
- 2) **That if the changes to the draft Plan warranted further Panel consideration ahead of publication, then the date of the next meeting of the Panel be brought forward for this purpose.**

#### **6. POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER'S UPDATE**

The Commissioner introduced his update report for discussions, during which Members raised the following issues:-

- In light of alcohol-related crime and anti-social behaviour continuing to be a major issue in Nottinghamshire, the possibility of a charge on breweries to help fund Police activity in response to this was raised. Members acknowledged that a number of public houses had recently closed and that any such charges could add to this trend.

- Members felt that reductions in crime were due to improved partnership working between the Police and other organisations. Concerns about the impact of cuts in provision in areas such as substance misuse educational programmes needed to be highlighted within Councils. Councils also had a responsibility to support collaborative working with the Police, particularly in areas such as licensing. Members felt that Police representation at licensing panels had decreased as a direct result of budget cuts. Members felt that the Commissioner had the opportunity to ensure such panels were sharing best practice, linking in to the Countywide meeting of Licensing Chairs as appropriate.

In response, the Commissioner stated that he was very aware of the need to build partnership working in order to address the 'and crime' aspects of his role. He commended the joint working between the City Council and the Police as a leading example of partnership working in community safety. He felt that the Police needed to be more proactive in their involvement around licensing. In principle, he was in favour of a night time levy, as proposed by the City Council, but recognised that there were potential negative impacts from this. He stated that the Alcohol Strategy previously being developed include the issues of referrals to courts and alcohol treatment programmes. This Strategy could be progressed further when the City and County Councils took on their new Public Health responsibilities in April 2013;

- Members underlined the need for educational activities to address repeat offending. More resources needed to be put into early intervention measures through providers such as Sure Start to help address domestic violence. In response, the Deputy Commissioner highlighted initiatives such as the Freedom Programme (delivered by Sure Start in partnership with domestic violence organisations) and the Healthy Relationships Programme (funded by schools and delivered by the Nottinghamshire Domestic Violence Forum). This was one of the issues which would be better addressed by the Police in partnership with other agencies, for example, via the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub in the County and the Domestic Abuse Referral Team in the City. The 'Troubled Families' agenda needed to also take more account of domestic violence issues. Greater focus was needed on medium-risk and repeat domestic violence. The Commissioner underlined the contribution of alcohol to reoffending;
- Members commended the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner for the energy that they had put into their community engagement activities so far;
- Members queried whether the name of the Commissioner's Audit and Scrutiny Panel could cause some confusion between its role and the Police and Crime Panel's role. The Commissioner underlined that he was legally required to have an Audit Panel and agreed to share its terms of reference. He stated that his Panel would focus on financial matters;
- Members highlighted the issue of fixed penalties being issued for serious crimes, including assault with weapons. Members also reported that the disparity between the level of fines imposed in courts and those linked to fixed

penalties was being pursued by the Local Government Association. Members felt that the use of fixed penalties resulted in a reduction in crime figures which therefore gave an inaccurate overall picture. The Commissioner felt that further consideration was needed to ensure that a professional approach was taken with restorative justice;

- Members felt that problems arising from migrants not understanding / following the law and the importance of following community sentences needed further consideration;
- the need for continued crime prevention work to educate the public was emphasised and it was recognised that enforcement alone was not the answer. Members felt that an increase in police officers on the beat could sometimes have a negative effect on perception of crime in an area. The Commissioner recognised the need for greater community involvement as although crime was reducing and satisfaction was increasing, the fear of crime was continuing to rise;
- Members felt that police officers needed to be trained to use the relevant digital equipment to clarify whether vicious dogs present at crime scenes had been 'chipped' as required;
- the increase in Proceeds of Crime income in this current year was commended. The Commissioner was keen for a proportion of this income to be given to partnerships;
- the issue of mobile phone theft from licensed premises in Nottingham city centre needed to be properly raised with the media. More details of this issue within the update report would have been helpful in that respect. The Deputy Commissioner underlined that the Commissioner's Office and Nottingham City Council were working with the Police to address this example of organised crime;
- the Commissioner underlined that the Force was currently improving better than any other nationally. The targets that had been set were tough and stretching but if achieved would result in the Force being the best in the country. However, the Commissioner and the Force's Chief Officer Team were aware that such targets could not be achieved by the Force alone and that partnership working was imperative.

#### **RESOLVED 2013/003**

**That the contents of the update report be noted.**

#### **7. WORK PROGRAMME**

#### **RESOLVED 2013/004**

**That the work programme be noted.**



The meeting closed at 1.10 pm

CHAIRMAN  
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