



WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL



MEETING OF THE HERTFORD SHIRE POLICE

MINUTES

(Please note the minutes are a brief summary of the discussion and are not intended to be verbatim)

Members Present: Cllr I Imarni (Vice Chair in the Chair), Dacorum Borough Council
Mr C Cowdrey, Independent Member
Dr M Ramsay, Independent Member
Cllr C Woodward, Hertfordshire County Council
Cllr G Saffery, Watford Borough Council
Cllr S Hodgson, St Albans City and District Council
Cllr P Choudhury, Hertsmere Borough Council

Also Present: Mr David Lloyd, Police and Crime Commissioner
Mr David Gibson, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner
Mr Chris Brace, Chief Executive, PCC
Dr Amie Birkhamshaw, Director of Strategy, PCC
Mr Stephen Billington, Acting Clerk to the Police and Crime Panel

1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Apologies received from Councillor S Monaghan (Chairman), Councillor A Curtis, Councillor A Scarth and Mr I Laidlaw-Dickson.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 19 SEPTEMBER 2019

Agreed.

3 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

The following public question received from Ms S Brady was put to the Commissioner:

- (1) Why is it that the police budget cannot be maintained for the coming year?
- (2) What difference have the additional police officers recruited in 2019 made to the service?
- (3) Have the additional police officers been a deterrent to crime i.e. has the crime rate increased, stayed the same or decreased since their recruitment in 2019 as there must be more presence on the streets?
- (4) Have the figures for solving crime (rather than deterrent) improved since these additional police officers were recruited in 2019?

The Commissioner replied as follows:

- (1) The precept is set to reflect the requirements for each year and the proposed increase is to support central Government's plans for policing and the views of the public. Whilst more police officers are to be funded via the Government, they require infrastructure such as IT support, uniforms, accommodation, etc., which results in additional accompanying costs.
- (2) It is too early to tell as many of the officers are still undergoing training, but feedback from neighbourhood chief inspectors is that districts have far more resilience as a result of the additional recruitment.
- (3) There is positive news on the County crime rate and the provision of more police officers is a factor that would affect this position, but it is not possible to make a direct comparison although crime levels have reduced.
- (4) Similar to the answer provided at (2) above, it is too early to directly link outcomes to additional police officers and Home Office recording requirements also do not make this comparison.

5 QUESTIONS TO THE PANEL AND PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None

6 PROPOSED POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER'S PRECEPT 2020/21

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) presented his precept report for 2020/21 for the setting of the police budget for the year ahead. He referred to his open letter on the precept and the circulated report on the precept consultation and commented on the plans and proposal for 2020/21 resulting in a precept of £198 for a Band D property.

The Panel members considered the precept proposals and posed a series of questions to the Commissioner including the following:

Panel: Are there any specific risks to the current 2019/20 budget that may require the use of reserves?

PCC: Expenditure is broadly in line with the budget and there were no expected risks to necessitate utilising reserves in the current year.

Panel: What is the intention for utilising the additional 300 police officers? Would it be business as usual or redirecting resources into new areas of criminality such as cyber crime, for example?

PCC: The additional officers being provided had only been recently notified to PCCs and the 2020/21 precept sets out the direction of travel. Over the next twelve months the strategic use of the additional resources would be considered, also perhaps by a new Police and Crime Commissioner following the elections in May. Work would continue in partnership with other agencies and ideas for the deployment of the new policing resources would always be welcome.

Panel: As gas and electricity costs in 2020/21 are shown to be increasing, is sufficient consideration being given to the climate emergency?

PCC: The increase in cost is not due to usage, and energy consumption is being considered for example during the development of plans for the new police headquarters, for example. Consideration was also being given to greener vehicles and the sharing of offices with other local government agencies to maximise the use of space and spread energy costs.

Panel: Is the £400,000 for additional investment in file quality sufficient or is more needed?

PCC: This additional funding is for quality control and is considered sufficient to provide for the more expeditious referral of decisions to Court.

Panel: What are the issues, and are there any concerns, regarding officer retention?

PCC: It is acknowledged that there are pressures on constabulary areas adjoining London, but this can work both ways with the potential of more varied policing roles in Hertfordshire with it being a smaller force when compared to the Metropolitan Police. Also, pay rates were set nationally and, therefore, were not able to be influenced by Commissioners.

Panel: The budget for the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner appeared less detailed than usual. What are the expectations for 2020/21?

PCC: Comments on the budget for the Office are given in the report. The percentage increase attributable to pay was due to a larger establishment as responsibility had been assumed for the complaints regime which was now entitled the 'Complaint Resolution Team' requiring an increase of three full time equivalent staff and the cost of the Criminal Justice Board was now met by the PCC office budget.

Panel: Are there any concerns over the closure of police front desks with regard to public service?

PCC: The need to operate front desk enquiry offices is reducing and was expected to continue as there were now alternative means of contacting the police and many services were now available online.

Panel: The cost of the national police air service appeared to be increasing. What is the reason for this?

PCC: This service charges retrospectively and the cost reflects the percentage of the total usage by the county force and the large core/base costs and, therefore, costs do vary annually.

Following scrutiny and questioning of the Commissioner and the precept proposals, it was recorded that the advice of the Panel members present was to agree the precept.

7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None

8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting and the future meeting programme would be agreed by the Chairman in consultation with the Panel Clerk.