

NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

Minutes of a special joint meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held at the Civic Centre, Barnstaple on Tuesday 20th May 2014 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Members representing North Devon Council:

Councillor Biederman (Chairman – In the Chair)

Councillors Brown, Chesters, Haywood, Lucas and Moores,

Members representing Torridge District Council:

Councillor Pennington (Chairman – In the Chair)

Councillors Christie, Ratledge (substituting for Councillor Brown), Simmons and Whittaker.

Independent Representative Mr Wrey.

Officers:

Representing North Devon Council: Corporate and Community Support Manager (JP), Member Services Co-ordinator (KS) and Corporate and Community Administrator (KD).

Representing Torridge District: Corporate Services Manager (JW) and Democratic Services Officer (SS).

Also present:

Mr T. Hogg Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon and Cornwall.

Ms L. Vango Strategy and Planning Manager – Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon and Cornwall.

10 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Luggar and Tucker.

11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest announced.

12 **QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION WITH THE POLICE
AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR DEVON AND
CORNWALL**

The Committee welcomed the Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon and Cornwall to the meeting. His attendance was to allow questions to be posed on the latest review of his Police and Crime Plan 2014/17.

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon and Cornwall (PCC) introduced the Strategy and Planning Manager who was one of the 20 employees that comprised his team. Copies of the presentation and abbreviated Plan would be available for the Members at the end of the meeting.

The PCC gave an outline of his professional background and the various roles that he had previously undertaken. He outlined the role of a PCC, advising that it was a pioneering role, with the current term ending in May 2016. As part of the role he advised that he worked with 18 MPs in his area and provided statistics and crime figures for each element of the force. In his 18 months in the post he said that he had achieved a great deal, with governance and transparency on track and a new plan now in place.

He advised that the Plan gave direction to policing and community safety partnerships and the public. The Plan was refreshed annually with the new version focussed on driving progress over the next three years. This included looking at what the PCC would do, the expectations of the Chief Constable and work with partner organisations.

He explained that there were six priorities, which focussed on the areas of:

- To make our area safer.
- A focus on cutting alcohol related harm.
- A renewed drive for efficiency and reducing cost.
- A more effective criminal justice system.
- Establishing new victim support services.
- To enable citizens to play their part in community safety.

During the consideration of the presentation, Members of the Committee raised and debated issues in relation to the following:

- The requirement for collaboration between Devon County Council (DCC), North Devon Council (NDC) and the Police regarding the impact upon service areas if the youth service was to lose funding?
- The PCC advised he had written to the Leader of DCC to voice his concerns regarding the proposed DCC budget led cuts to the Youth Service and the impact upon local youth centres. He agreed to forward a copy of his letter to the Committee.

- The Committee discussed the importance of youth centres and targeting of young people at primary school level.
- The PCC advised that there would be no change to the approach by the police as a result of any cuts to the youth service, with diversity and youth intervention programmes still in operation.
- The PCC expressed his concern at the impact on youth of significant changes in the probation service, which was a huge area that would continue to be closely monitored.
- The Committee posed a question on the proposed closure of youth clubs and the provision of PCSOs in the evening to support the subsequent impact upon anti social behaviour. The PCC advised that youth clubs were not just a policing issue and that PCSOs would already be providing support to youth clubs in their own time. He advised that he would meet separately with the Member concerned to discuss concerns within her ward.
- A question was raised regarding the volume of vulnerable young people who would slip through the net if they were not involved in targeted services and whether this had been accounted for in the Plan.
- The Strategy and Planning Manager advised that there was a small grants scheme of up to £5,000 for groups to access and that this would be available until May 2015.
- The Committee highlighted the vagueness of the use of volunteers within the Plan and questioned how they would be utilised.
- The Police and Crime Commissioner stated that he recognised deficiencies in the number of volunteers at the present time and acknowledged that it made sense to augment volunteers through a proper programme. He advised that they were looking to establish a volunteering management scheme to incorporate all areas of the volunteers service.
- He further advised that they had spent six months working on the six strands of the Plan with Volunteering Cornwall and that he would be happy to report back to the Committee in one month to discuss the progress.
- The Committee discussed street pastors and their effectiveness within the community. However, there had been areas where the service had been lost due to a lack of funding and support by volunteers.
- The Strategy and Planning Manager advised that street pastors were fundamental to the priorities within the Plan regarding alcohol, with volunteers operating in local communities through support to churches and local organisations. She also advised that some areas were operating a successful school pastor scheme to deal with anti social behaviour and that this was something that could be encouraged within the local areas.
- The Committee discussed the probation service and the issues surrounding the current system. The PCC advised that from 1st June 2014 the probation service would be split into four parts, with a quarter

comprising the National Probation Service. The remaining elements of the service would then be tendered for by private community rehabilitation companies; the transition process would then be shadowed and operated by the old service until the end of 2015.

- In response to a question regarding domestic abuse and the removal of the victim from a private residence as opposed to the perpetrator, the PCC advised that in situations such as these it was important to try and provide an environment where victims of domestic abuse felt safe.
- The PCC advised that the police were very focussed on the reporting mechanism regarding domestic abuse and whilst they were mindful that they couldn't prevent the initial attack, there was a great deal of support available to the victim to ensure that any repeat offences were fully logged. He explained that he had received assurances that the recent changes in DCC's service provider was a change in the way the service was delivered without an unacceptable increase in the danger to victims. He agreed to provide a copy of that assurance to the Committee.
- The Strategy and Planning Manager advised that they would be reviewing the increase in reported numbers of domestic abuse cases with the view to encouraging victims to come forward and report incidents. She further advised that there was a specific expectation from the PCC upon the Chief Constable to ensure that the figures were reduced.
- The Committee raised concerns in relation to the powers of PCSOs and questioned whether there could be a more joined up service with the focus on dog fouling and parking. The PCC acknowledged there was an issue and advised that the police had to develop the right policing mixture for the future and welcomed the support of the Committee in their acknowledgement of the risk to neighbourhood policing if the PCSOs were removed. He advised that there was a requirement for greater powers in terms of issuing penalty notices and fines.
- In response to a question from a resident of Beechfield Road in Fremington regarding ongoing parking issues, the PCC acknowledged that the 101 service was not working as efficiently as it could be and that this was in the Plan to allow for further work to be undertaken to improve its performance. He advised that the vast majority of parking offences were managed by County Councils and that the police would only intervene if obstruction or danger resulted.
- The PCC commended the use of the radio system in Ilfracombe and stated that the system should be rolled out across the area.
- In response to a question, the PCC advised that he had written to the Scrutiny Panels at DCC but would be happy to attend them in person to make his views known regarding the proposed cuts to the youth service.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the letter from the Police and Crime Commissioner to the Leader of Devon County Council, Cllr John Hart regarding the proposed DCC budget led cuts to the youth

service and the impact upon the local youth centres, be circulated to the Committee;

- (b) that the Police and Crime Commissioner forward a letter to the Committee that he received assuring him of the changes resulting to threats to refuge centres did not pose an unacceptable increase in the danger to victims; and
- (c) that the next meeting of the Committee receive a further report by the Police and Crime Commissioner on the progress of improvements to volunteering.

Councillor Brown declared a personal interest as a licensee.

The Committee thanked the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Strategy and Planning Manager from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for their attendance at the meeting.

13 DEVON AND CORNWALL POLICE STATION ENQUIRY OFFICES STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The Committee discussed proposals to close a number of police station enquiry offices across Devon and Cornwall.

The PCC advised that the police had to find savings and that the team had looked at the proposals and the business case showed that the public were not using the offices in certain areas meaning resources were being wasted. He further advised that there was a list of the enquiry offices affected and this could be made available to Members upon request. He stated that the police had to achieve savings of up to £12m, with three quarters of a million of this being contributed by closing the underused enquiry offices. A consultation process had been undertaken and the changes were likely to be implemented by the police later in the year. However, he had sought assurances from the Chief Constable that members of the public would still be easily able to contact the police when needed.

In response to a question regarding the opening times of Barnstaple Police Station, the Strategy and Planning Manager advised that there were currently proposals to open the enquiry office for half a day on Saturdays and a full day on Mondays. The PCC advised that they would fully consult with the Council to discuss alternative mechanisms for face to face contact with the police.

In response to a further question regarding the accuracy of crime reporting figures, the PCC advised that there were issues with the system and that there was always a risk of distorted figures. The system needed to be standardised and this would be reviewed in the future.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at North Devon Council thanked Members from both Councils for their attendance at the meeting and welcomed the opportunity of working together.

The Police and Crime Commissioner thanked both Committees for the invitation to attend and discuss local issues with the Members.

Chairman

The meeting ended at 12.21 p.m.

NOTE: These minutes will be confirmed as a correct record at the next meeting of the Committee.