

NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the CRIME AND DISORDER SUB-COMMITTEE of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at Brynsworthy Environment Centre, Barnstaple on Tuesday 18th September 2018 at 12.00 noon.

PRESENT: Members:

Councillor Mathews (Chair)

Councillors J. Cann, Chesters, Ley and Worden.

Officers:

Community Protection Manager (AP),
Corporate and Community Services Officer (AD).

Also Present:

Alison Hernandez Police and Crime Commissioner
Superintendent Jim Gale (Devon and Cornwall Police)
Sergeant Noel Bourke (Devon and Cornwall Police)
Councillor Hackett (of Torridge District Council, (TDC))
Councillor Pennington (TDC)
Phil Topham (Non- elected Member TDC)

(a) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bonds, Patrinos, Roome, Spear and White.

(b) MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 16th November 2017 (circulated previously) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

(c) DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were announced:

Councillor Worden Item 6- Personal interest as his son is a detective for Devon and Cornwall Police.

Councillor Mathews Item 6 – Personal interest as he is a Devon County Council appointee to the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority.

(d) POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER: UPDATE ON THE ACTIVITY OF THE OFFICE OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER.

The Sub-Committee received an update on the activity of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) from the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), Ms Alison Hernandez.

The Police and Crime Commissioner gave the following updates:

- Devon and Cornwall and Dorset Police were the first authorities to consider a merger and a widespread consultation with local stakeholders had taken place over the summer.
- The final business case for the merger had only just reached the Crime Commissioner.
- At the next Alliance Convergence Board meeting, which was to be held on 25th September 2018, a decision would be sought from both Chief Constables and both Police Crime Commissioners.
- The Police and Crime Panel would be informed at their next meeting to be held on 5th October 2018.
- The information would be in the public domain the week prior to this meeting.
- If the proposal was agreed on all sides the full business case would be submitted to the Home Office by 12th October 2018.
- It would be anticipated the Home Secretary would make a final decision in December 2018 or January 2019.
- Any changes would need to be in place ahead of the next PCC elections in 2020.
- Engagement events had been held across northern Devon throughout the year.
- Ilfracombe had very similar issues to those experienced in the south of the county, it had come to light that small businesses needed better support against business crime and this was an area the PCC would be looking at.
- Devon and Cornwall Police were the only force in the country expanding its officer numbers.
- Officers were to start wearing body cams. This equipment would support officer safety and enhance evidence as well as reduce complaints.
- There was a £300,000 budget for the CCTV initiative to be rolled out across Devon and Cornwall. North Devon were working with the PCC team to look at how we might work smarter with our existing provision
- Exeter were to close their old custody suite at Heavitree Road and a new custody suite and operational facility would replace it.
- There was to be an additional number of Tri-service officers.
- The Local Criminal Justice Board was setting up working with Exeter Prison Governors to provide funding for help with clothing and housing once an offender had left prison

- A pilot programme providing offenders who suffered from poor mental health with a 12 week programme helping them with their mental health issues. The aim of this programme was the reduction of offenders being sent to prison.
- Devon and Cornwall Police were the second force in the country to run Pathfinder – an early intervention and diversion scheme. The offender, with the victim's consent, would have no further action taken against them if they carried out voluntary work for a four month period.
- A new road safety strategy was being launched. More information to follow. There was recognition of the work of the local Community Safety Partnership Road Safety working group and joint initiatives with the OPCC.
- The Peninsula Road Safety forum, which was a collaboration of local authorities and partners, was developing its scope for change.
- The Community Speedwatch programme was to be renewed with the new action plan expected within six weeks.
- A national modern slavery unit was based in Exmouth which consisted of analyst specialist officers who investigated and disrupted modern slavery cases.
- A Trading Standards pilot was being set up to help consumers make better choices when purchasing goods. The pilot was looking to make a Modern Slavery test part of the supply chain.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Police and Crime Commissioner confirmed the following:

Question one from Chairman: Bearing in mind the comments of the Chief Constable of Police Scotland that one size does not fit all, does the PCC think that this could apply to the proposed merger of the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary with Dorset Police? Will it be too big bearing in mind large City /Urban areas with a very large rural area? The fear I have is that the rural areas will lose out.

Response: the natural response to focusing resources would be to deploy them in the area where there was the highest demand which tended to be urban settings. It was the job of the PCC to challenge this and support rural engagement specials. The use of tri-service officers was being looked at to develop further in rural areas in Devon.

Question two from Councillor Hackett of TDC: Police Community Support Officers (PCSO's) are an invaluable policing asset within Torridge as they have become embedded within the community gathering local intelligence without which in the words of one PCSO "the regular Constabulary could not do its job safely" particularly in rural locations. There has been speculation regarding future PCSO numbers which have been reportedly secured at 200 for the foreseeable future. Could the current PCSO numbers at Bideford, Torrington and Holsworthy be stated, and can these numbers be confirmed as being ring-fenced for the future, that is a PCSO will be replaced if one resigns or is transferred?

Response: Officer Recruitment was being increased as the number of PCSO's was to be decreased to 200 by 2020. There were no planned redundancies and Members were asked to give reassurance to communities that might lose a PCSO through retirement that there was to be an increase in Police Officers. Exact numbers in specific locations could not be released yet.

Question three from Councillor Hackett of TDC: There was an enhanced precept of £12 on a Band D property last year for "additional officers" and should the proposed merger with Dorset go ahead there will be a precept alignment take place to bridge the £18 differential and a proposal to increase staffing by "240 staff or officers". Over the last 2 years how many additional officers have been created within Devon and Cornwall, and how many of these officers are actually based within the North Devon operational area?

Response: Dorset only received 40% of the council tax whereas Devon received 50% of their Band D equivalent. To recruit the extra officers the PCC might consider an initial rise council tax and once savings made a drop in the level of council tax would be made. It was unlikely that this idea would receive backing.

Question four from Chairman: A Road Safety Plan was due to be published in July/August 2018. This has not yet been published. When is it likely to be done?

Response: the time scale for the road safety plan had slipped but was due to be published in the next six weeks.

Question five from Councillor Hackett of TDC: There is a concern about a lack of a physical presence of "traffic" officers in rural areas leading to a belief that it is unlikely that people driving under the influence of drugs and alcohol will be caught. As the Police and Crime Commissioner is national lead on Road Safety how will she remedy this especially as she was told in a recent Police and Crime meeting about the saying "Five and Drive" (you are safe to drink five pints and drive)?

Response: as mentioned in the update a specialist team tackling road safety were based at Exeter travelling the Devon area. Along with this the strategy to recruit volunteers in the Community Speedwatch was being reviewed. The No Excuses team are active across Devon with targeted activity on road safety issues including drugs and alcohol.

Question six from Councillor Hackett of TDC: Police have to respond to incidents where people need to be taken to a place of safety (APOS) which entails two officers taking someone to a location in South Devon out of hours, which ties up two officers for most of a shift, which is not the optimum use of resources. Can this be resolved by finding a suitable local location?

Response: the definition of what constitutes a safe place was being looked at. If this could be redefined then an option locally could be found to remove a mentally unwell offender to safety. Police staff were not trained to look after

people with mental illness and the biggest risk was a death in the care of the police.

Superintendent Gale added that crises cafes were being set up as place a person in need could seek help.

The PCC then received questions from the Committee in relation to her updates and the following responses were given:

- The Police would not be paying towards the cost of the new CCTV system but the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office were.
- There were no plans to move officers into urban areas as a result of any possible merger with Dorset Police. The additional numbers of public to the area as a result of tourism was not accounted for by Central Government in its calculation of funding formula. Central Government needed to be petitioned with a view to recalculating the funding formula. The PCC reminded Members there were lots of different channels available to the public to contact the police. As well as the 101 number the public could use web chat.
- The PCC asked Members to advise their community that it was always important to report crime and any community intelligence that might help prevent it.
- The impact of the work done by the PCC was as a result of issues that were brought to her attention by members of the public. The farming community had not petitioned her with any of their concerns but invited them to get in touch.
- Community Speedwatch had the largest number of volunteers so if it was felt there were issues with community interest in volunteering in this area better promotion of this project was needed. The Community Protection Manager advised that a new Citizens in Policing post had recently been filled and liaising with communities was one of their functions.
- The privately run probation services were facing funding challenges but there was no financial support to de-privatise this area of work either.
- The issues around technology was holding up the uploading of dash cam evidence from members of the public in relation to road incidents. Support of this continued and the issues would be overcome eventually.
- The number of cyclists using the roads had increased significantly and with farm machinery getting ever larger it would be a good idea to bring together road users from different sectors to discuss needs. This area was not a conversation the PCC had had with anyone but welcomed a letter on the subject.
- The unit tackling cyber-crime was a small one but Devon and Cornwall were the only force in the country to have a dedicated team.
- The changes in legislation made recently regarding cold calling were in relation to legitimate companies not to fraudulent activities. There were due to be further Bitesize sessions later in the year covering the message of not giving out personal information.

- The use of shorter sentences given to offenders was not working but with no other option available to them the courts have to hand out short sentences to multiple re-offenders.
- With the recent news of the Devon man sentenced for bomb making devices found in his home it was an opportunity that could be used as a topic for a Bitesize briefing. Members were invited to attend Bitesize briefings by the Community Protection Manager.

(e) WORK PROGRAMME 2018/19

The Committee considered the Work Programme 2018/19 (circulated previously).

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

It was requested that the noise monitoring situation at Batsworthy Farm be placed on the Overview and Scrutiny work programme for consideration at a future committee.

The Chairman thanked the Officers for their attendance at the meeting.

Chairman

The meeting ended at 13.40 p.m.

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