

Minutes of the meeting of the Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel held on 7 February 2013

Present:

Members of the Panel

Councillors:

Dennis Harvey	Nuneaton & Bedworth Council (Chair)
Michael Doody	Warwick District Council
Alan Farnell	Warwickshire County Council
Eithne Goode	Warwickshire County Council
David Johnston	Warwickshire County Council
Peter Morson	North Warwickshire Borough Council
Gillian Roache	Stratford on Avon District Council (from item 6 onwards)
Ray Sweet	Warwickshire County Council
Helen Walton	Warwickshire County Council

Independent members (appointed at this meeting):

Bob Malloy
Robin Verso

Police and Crime Commissioner's Office:

Ron Ball	Police and Crime Commissioner
Eric Wood	Deputy police and Crime Commissioner
Mark Gore	Interim Chief Executive
Dave Clarke	Treasurer
Dave Stenning	Policy Officer

WCC Officers:

David Carter	Strategic Director, Resources (Monitoring officer for the Panel)
John Betts	Head of Finance
Lisa Mowe	Deputy Communications Manager
Jane Pollard	Head of Corporate Legal
Janet Purcell	Democratic Services Manager

1. **General**

(1) Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Derek Poole, Rugby Borough Council.

(2) Minutes of previous meetings

Resolved

That the minutes of 7 and 11 January be approved as correct record.

The Panel was assured that a report on the question of allowances for co-opted members would be brought to the next meeting.

(3) Members' Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None.

2. Proposed Local Police Precept

The Panel considered the Police and Crime Commissioner's proposed budget precept and budget proposals as published on 1 February 2013. It was noted that the Panel was required by the Police and Reform Social Responsibility Act 2011 to review and make a report to the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) on his proposed precept by 8 February and that the Panel had an option to veto the precept.

The PCC, Ron Ball, outlined the basis for his budget proposals, explaining that he had inherited a sound budget position and that the medium term plan was on track. The Government settlement had also been better than anticipated and only one person during his consultation had suggested a tax increase, all others welcoming no increase. Ron Ball therefore concluded that he would confirm his intention of a 0% increase to the precept. He added that the position on reserves was healthy and that this enabled him to use some of the reserves (£2.3m) to meet his key priority areas: communication (including the appointment of community ambassadors); recruitment of special constables and community safety initiatives. A further £2m would be put into supporting the retention of PCSOs.

The Panel members asked a number of questions as set out below.

Basis of Budget

- (1) Councillor Michael Doody expressed concern that the document on budget proposals lacked detail and that there was no explanation of where savings will come from, how expenditure will be allocated and the use of reserves is unclear. Councillor Doody asked the PCC to provide more detail so that the Panel can better judge whether or not it should support the proposals.

Ron Ball answered that he had been required to work to tight timescales this year and that in a normal year the budget planning would start in September. Ron Ball gave his assurance that he would

provide more detail for the Panel and involve the Panel earlier in future.

Dave Clarke explained that the grant settlement is only for one year so the PCC could only set a one year budget. This meant that planning for future years is difficult and has to be based on a number of assumptions, which may prove to be optimistic. Dave Clarke added that the relatively high level of reserves reflected the need for caution at this point. (The answer to question 4 below also refers to reserves).

- (2) Councillor Helen Walton asked how confident the PCC is in the assumption that there will be the decline in net expenditure between 2013/14 to 2017/18.

Ron Ball answered that he was confident. The projection was predicated on the alliance working and in his view that was on track. He was confident that savings will be delivered but added that there is a small provision should there be slippage. Both partners in the alliance are aware of the importance of making the savings.

- (3) Robin Verso commented that the budget before the panel only gave budget changes, and that it was difficult to understand the underlying budget and to make a judgement about whether the proposals before the panel are appropriate.

Ron Ball gave his assurance that he did not intend hiding anything and that more detail would be provided and that he envisaged an on-going debate with the Panel in future.

- (4) Robin Verso asked for an explanation of what the reserves in Table 4 represent and why they appeared to be set so high. Is the PCC being overly prudent and depriving Warwickshire people of additional service?

Dave Clarke explained that there was a need to harmonise reserves across the alliance. The level of reserves puts Warwickshire in the upper quartile of policing areas. This is intentional and allows for catastrophic incidents and recognises that it is not possible to reduce staffing levels quickly should cuts be necessary. Ron Ball added that uncertainty of future financing required him to be prudent.

- (5) Councillor Eithne Goode asked what the expenditure on estates is for and what assumptions have been applied when estimating capital receipts.

Ron Ball advised that the estates position was changeable but that he would report the latest position to the Panel.

- (6) Councillor Gillian Roache asked in what areas savings were being made and whether this involved personnel.

Ron Ball replied that, given that the majority of policing cost is for staffing, it is inevitable that reductions impact on staffing levels. The estimated pay related savings total £4.2m.

- (7) Councillor Gillian Roache referred to the comment in the budget about a potential for service reductions if savings are not met and asked at what level service reductions would become unpalatable for the PCC.

Ron Ball replied that this was difficult to answer at this point. If performance deteriorates then he would look to the Chief Constable for rapid action.

Eric Wood added that the Chief Constable had already achieved savings over and above the target and that the PCC has made it clear that he wishes these savings to be directed to front-line policing.

- (8) Councillor David Johnston questioned whether the PCC is confident that savings will be made, given that there is cost associated with delivering the policing model.

Ron Ball replied that he is confident and that this is being monitored continually. Dave Clarke added that all heads of support functions are already in place.

Eric Wood added that the Alliance Blueprint is only a de minimus model and that the PCC is looking at how it can be taken further. This is reflected in the increase in PCSOs from the Blueprint figure and increase in Special Constables.

Proposed Development Reserve

- (9) Councillor Michael Doody asked whether the proposed community ambassadors would be paid.

Ron Ball advised that these will be voluntary posts but that he proposed an allowance of £875 per annum to cover their time (e.g. in attending meetings, writing reports, making contacts etc.) plus travel expenses.

- (10) Bob Malloy noted that the reserve figures show £2m for this reserve, with £1m for on-going years and asked what is the expected lifespan for the reserve and what is the play beyond that.

Ron Ball explained that he intended that the number of PCSOs should not fall below 100. Dave Clarke added that there is already a reserve for PCSOs and the PCC is adding an additional reserve of £2.5m.

(11) Bob Malloy commented that there are many areas the PCC could have considered for funding (for example for patrols outside of licensed premises, or to target drugs or violence) and asked why the PCC chose PCSOs.

Ron Ball replied that he had made this decision in the light of public feedback. The public had told him that they thought highly of their PCSOs and wanted to have an officer who was known to them.

(12) Councillor Eithne Goode asked how the PCC will ensure PCSOs are in schools.

Ron Ball agreed that schools found PCSOs very effective and he wanted to be sure they reach young people. He added that the powers of PCSOs are going to be increased, but that this is a decision for the Chief Constable. Eric Wood undertook to bring a briefing paper to the Panel setting out the powers of special constables and PCSOs.

Community Safety

(13) Councillor Peter Morson asked whether the PCC is confident that the Community Safety Grant is adequate and how he will be supporting victims of crime and anti-social behaviour (given that current funding for victim support is not adequate and runs out in 2014).

Ron Ball replied that it is not clear what funding has been withdrawn from organisations but he will undertake to fund 2013/14 on the same basis as the current year as a minimum guarantee for organisations. Community safety partnerships will, however, be expected to ensure their proposed projects are evidence based.

Ron Ball praised the work of Victim and Witness Support and said that he would not let them run out of funding.

Dave Clarke explained that the picture was unclear because the Home Office could not tell the PCC which organisations had benefited to date from the various funding streams. He estimated that there will be a shortfall of some £150,000. He expected organisations who had found they had lost funding will come forward over the coming weeks.

Eric Wood advised that there approximately £8.7m is being spent on community safety within the county and there will be merit in looking at how PCC priorities align with those of the County Council and suggested this be discussed at a future meeting of the Panel.

Conclusion

The Panel accepted the budget proposals as an interim approach but looked forward to more detailed information at future meetings in order that

they can monitor progress of both the Police and Crime Plan and the Budget.

Councillor Alan Farnell moved that the precept be accepted and was seconded by Councillor Peter Morson. The motion was accepted on a vote of 9 for and 2 against.

Resolved

- (1) That the Police and Crime Panel accept the Police and Crime Commissioner's proposed 0% increase in precept and agree that a summary of the Panel's views be put in a report to the Commissioner.
- (2) That a report of the Panel's discussion be prepared and forwarded to the PCC by 8 February 2013.

A copy of the report is appended to these minutes.

3 Draft Police and Crime Plan

The Panel noted the draft plan which would be considered fully at its meeting in March.

Councillor David Johnston asked what progress had been made with the communication strategy. Ron Ball advised that this was moving forward. His priority is the recruitment campaign for ambassadors who will be his and the communities 'eyes and ears'. Eric Wood added that a number of meetings had been held with county and district/borough leaders and officers to consider how best to engage (informally and formally) and how often they should meet. In addition the PCC will have a rolling programme of district based surgeries, attendance at locality forum meetings and other community based engagement.

The Panel noted that the draft Police and Crime Plan had been published on the PCC website and that comments were welcome from anyone by 25 February. The timescale meant that consultation was not as extensive as it may have been but the Draft Plan will be issued earlier in future and will have wider distribution.

The Panel looked forward to considering the Draft Police and Crime Plan in detail at its meeting on 12 March 2013.

4 Any other business

None

5. Future meetings of the Panel

The Panel agreed that the provisional meeting of 21 February is no longer required as the panel has accepted the PCC budget precept.

The next meeting of the Panel will be 12 March at 2.00pm for consideration of the Police and Crime Plan.

The meeting rose at 3.50 pm.

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Chair

Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner – Budget Proposals and Precept.

Report of the Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel.

1.0 Introduction

The Police and Crime Panel (PCP) is required by the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 to review and make a report to the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) on the Commissioner's proposed local police precept by 8 February. The Panel has the option to veto the precept at this stage. The PCC issued his proposed precept by the required deadline of 1 February along with budget proposals. The Panel considered the proposals at its meeting on 7 February and agreed to accept the 0% increase in precept proposed by the PCC. The Panel reached its conclusion after questioning the PCC and with the PCC's assurance on some key points raised by the Panel. The minutes of the Panel's meeting set out the questions put by the Panel and the PCC responses. This report summarises the key points raised by the Panel and that the panel wish the PCC to take into account over the coming year and in preparation for future year's budgets.

2.0 Budget Information

The Panel welcomed the PCC's decision to also share his draft Police and Crime Plan ahead of formal consideration by the Panel in March, as the Plan should be the starting point for the development of the budget and priorities reflected in the budget allocations. The Panel, however, was concerned that the budget as presented gave only a high level summary of budget movements and failed to provide detail on where savings will come from and how the expenditure will be allocated. The Panel would also like an explanation of the estates strategy, including recent changes referred to by the PCC, and would like to see a clearer explanation of reserves.

The Panel considered the presentation of the budget was a barrier for the Panel in forming a judgement about the appropriateness of the budget. The Panel has had to accept the assurance of the PCC that he is confident that the strategic alliance work will continue on course; that the good performance in relation to meeting savings targets will continue and that the retention of a high level of reserves is appropriate at this point (allowing that the budget is based on only a 1 year government settlement and that there is uncertainty about future years funding). The Panel has noted the PCC's commitment to monitoring performance and to ensuring the Chief Constable takes rapid action if there is any deterioration in performance.

The Panel looks forward to having more detail about the underlying basis of the budget and to earlier involvement in the development of the budget in future years. The Panel welcomes the PCC's assurance that budget planning for 2014/15 will start in September and will include an ongoing dialogue with the Panel.

3. Budget Priorities

The Panel noted the three priorities (innovative community safety initiatives, increase in special constables and introduction of community ambassadors) which are to be funded from a new £2m reserve, and the £2.3m reserve to support the retention of PCSOs. The Panel generally supported these initiatives and looked forward to further details, including exactly how the £2m reserve will be allocated. The Panel did, however, note that there are many areas the PCC could have considered and the Panel will be interested to see feedback from public consultation on the draft Police and Crime Plan.

The Panel welcomed being given more detail on the proposed community ambassadors (who will have an allowance of £875 pa plus travel costs) and to learn that the Chief Constable was considering an expansion of powers of PCSOs. The Panel look forward to receiving a briefing on roles and powers of Special Constables and PCSOs at its next meeting.

4. Community Safety Budget

The Panel are concerned that the Community Safety Grant will be adequate, noting the assessment by the Treasurer to the PCC that there could be a £150k shortfall compared to previous equivalent funding to organisations. The Panel has noted the PCC's intention to support organisations in 2013/14 at the level they have had in previous years to allow continuity of service where possible and his commitment to ensuring that funding for Victim and Witness Support continues.

The Panel welcome further information on how allocations will be made and how the PCC will align his priorities with those of partners, particularly those of the Community Safety Partnerships, and Councils within Warwickshire.

5. Conclusion

The Panel accepts the budget proposals as an interim approach but look forward to more detailed information at future meetings in order that the Panel can monitor progress of both the Police Plan and the Budget. The Panel also looks forward to engagement in the budget process for 2014/15 that will start in September.